

EYES OF THE LAW

By
Ethel Penman Hope



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By

Ethel Penman Hope

Author of "A Hillside Christmas" "Dr. Paul," etc.

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CHAPTER I.

"I will marry you, Robert—on one condition only."

The speaker was a tall young woman, of striking appearance, noticeable for the dark, silky eyelashes shading unusually beautiful blue eyes, and for a vivacity and charm of manner displaying a remarkably magnetic personality.

"Beggars may not be choosers," he retorted. "My fate rests in your hands; I have but one request—that you temper judgment with mercy."

She laughed. "Indeed! I shall see about that." Then smiling into his eyes, "Why so serious? The situation lacks entirely the elements of tragedy. Surely the terms are easy—one condition only—merely one. I might have made it a score—my mercy is already much in evidence."

"My mistake," he answered tritely, "Shall I sing or shout?"

"Your sudden humility rings false; it probably covers some—"

"Vice—Alice—right you are and many of them. I am full of vice—we cannot part company. 'Like me, like my dog.' I am

too old to change; if I began to pull myself to pieces at this age, my end would be sad to relate," he parried, waiting her further reply to his question. But she did not answer, her face was turned from him, and she seemed in a quandary. He spoke slowly, leaning towards her.

"When are you going to end this wretched suspense, Alice? Think what it may mean to me—that one condition—if perchance you demand the accomplishment of some feat, the undertaking of which your intelligence assures you is quite impossible for a man of my miserable courage." Then impulsively he turned to her, while his voice became very tender and serious. "If you had only paused on that blessed word 'you'—‘I will marry “you”’—meaning me. You and I together—forever—I could fill in such an ending—though really just the beginning of all that is in my heart to tell you, Alice."

"Do not despair," his adored one assured him much too flippantly. "With equal sincerity I uttered both the beginning and end of that sentence."

"My heart clings to the first, but in the spirit of fear so natural to frail humanity dreads—yet hopes—in regard to the ending."

"Faint heart ne'er won—You know the rest,

Robert—so summon your fleeting courage and bid it present a calmer—”

“Calm,—I am as calm as any mortal man could be under the circumstances. But why all this flippancy, when a question of such importance to us both remains to be settled.”

“Settled—Robert!” She was serious now and faced him while he reached for her hand. “I cannot settle the question other than I stated a moment ago.”

“You mean that your acceptance or refusal depends entirely upon one condition, as yet unnamed.”

“I do.”

“Shall I blindly accept that condition, Alice?”

“No; you will hear it, and please feel free to refuse, if you desire. Freedom is the dominant note in the condition.”

“Ah!” He felt relieved. “That is simple, I will wait any period of time that you demand —so long as you are mine in the end.”

From the window where they stood could be seen the great river flowing out into the sea, and beyond, the hills that lifted their brows to the azure sky of a perfect summer day. To the two at the window the picture grew visionary. Robert Smith saw in the golden sunlight the glory of life as he hoped it would be, and the

distant hills, as their climb together up to the heights, but this hesitation on the part of Alice to face the issue, cast a cloud across the sky and a mist over the hills. Did it imply an unwillingness to face the question at all? "Was the day lost?" he asked himself. If the "condition" meant a summer of trifling, the agony would be long drawn out. Why not something definite? "No" would be sudden pain—but—"perhaps," "maybe," "if," all pointed to misery administered in small doses.

Lifting the hand he held, he placed it on his shoulder, while his eyes sought hers and held them, "Alice, I want a direct answer now—yes, or no." Her voice did not waver nor her eyes wander from his, while her words rang out with a strength of purpose and depth of feeling, that proved the prestige of the question she had to answer.

"If you demand an answer now, it will have to be in the negative, Robert, but—"

"Go on."

"Do you demand it?"

"Do you love me?"

"I believe that I do."

"Alice—"

"Just one moment—allow me to finish—although believing that I do, I wish to test myself—to prove my love—and yours."

"Mine! why, you know—"

"Yes; but listen, Robert. It is time to study history—yours and mine. We each thought something of the same nature before, did we not?"

"Any need for reminiscence?"

"Just now there is—Robert, be honest—the occasion requires it. Turn back the pages—our lives have been much alike in some respects—and you will find that we each did the same thing about the same time."

"You refer to my marriage?"

"Yes, and mine."

"I thought we had agreed to nail over that gate post, 'No trespassing?'" Her face flushed, and she turned away from him. "I am sorry, Robert; but I feel it to be necessary this once—in order to insure ourselves against the possibility of ever having to nail a similar notice over the next gate post."

"You are indeed frank."

"Anything is better than another mistake. Robert, will you discard all superfluous dignity, and come over here to this cosy lounge—sit down beside me and with an open mind—allow me to explain just what I mean."

"This is certainly the very sweetest and kindest thing you have said." His bow and smile as-

sured her his readiness to listen to anything reasonable, as he seated himself beside her.

Robert McKay Smith was a big, square-shouldered, clean-shaven, kindly-eyed man, wearing that expression of middle-aged complaisance which marks the man who has in a worldly sense "made good" to a degree of self satisfaction. His private life had not been a specially happy one, and the present reference to it brought back a flood of painful memory. With his hands thrust deep in his pockets, and brows puckered he reviewed a bit of that "back chapter" as he waited for Alice to continue.

"Did I ever tell you," her voice was low and she spoke guardedly, "just what element entered into my married life to mar it."

"I think not."

"Robert, if you married me now and in a short time discovered that you had married a jealous woman, what would you do?"

He turned sharply at her words. "Jealousy" he snapped out, "what do you know of it?"

Disregarding the question, her lifted eyebrows denoted surprise, "Your expression and remarks interest me, Robert. Perhaps you have something to say, before I commit myself further—"

He hesitated; his face was stern and he eyed her narrowly.

"I myself know nothing about jealousy, except as I have watched the evil thing grow in the heart of another."

Then without looking at him, she asked in a low voice, "Now—will you kindly answer my question?"

"Yes, if after marrying you, I discovered the thing you suggest, I could not live with you?"

She looked up, her eyes flashing a challenge, "Neither could I—if placed in a similar position, do you understand?"

"But surely, you—"

"No, I do not mean to insinuate anything. You and I regard this thing with equal repugnance, and I am forced to believe—" She paused, but he did not deny what he knew she was about to say, "That we have each suffered on account of it."

He did not reply, and for a moment they remained silent. His mind turning back to those days, when every action and smile of his had been questioned; when life had become a thing from which if it had been possible the freedom of thought itself would have been deprived him. While Alice Bell Wright, widow of the late Harold Wright, reverted to the cause of her own unhappiness only long enough to gather from it sufficient courage to steer her course away from

its territory entirely, out into the open plain where the sweet flowers of perfect trust and confidence thrive and bloom.

She was the first to speak, and the lightness of her tone reassured him. "It is all so much easier now, Robert."

"That is good," he answered, not comprehending.

"You see, I had never inquired concerning your married life—and was therefore in complete ignorance; but now that I know how very similar our experience has been, I feel that you will readily acquiesce to my suggestion."

He smiled, "And am I at last to learn the conditions? Surely enough time has been spent on preliminaries, Alice. I would not care to be a child waiting for you to finish a fairy tale."

"You are no doubt aware that often the thing worse than failure to realize ones desires, is to realize them."

"Do you refer to the case in hand?"

"It might be," she laughed, the restraint of the moment before, now completely gone; "but because you have been so patient, I will now proceed to unfold the plan your proposal has suggested to me. Les Quatre Vents, at Rainbow Bay, as you know, is the favourite rendezvous for travelers from all over the world—the idle

rich, fashionable, illustrious, and charming people of both sexes, gather there to holiday." She paused, watching him expectantly; then, somewhat impatiently, continued, "Robert, have you any idea of what I am about to suggest?"

"None whatever, my mind is a blank."

"Well then, I want to explain first." She toyed with the string of jets at her neck, and proceeded somewhat hesitatingly, "I have lived very quietly these last few years—as I believe you have—only meeting old friends, making no new ones." She paused.

Robert Smith sat immobile, his gaze fixed on the rug at his feet.

She rose abruptly and after turning on a shaded light returned and stood before him, exclaiming irritably, "Robert Smith! if only you would not be so calm; just now you tantalize me; but I will finish. How do we know that, providing some very engaging person were thrown into our path we might not forsake the old love for the new? I know it sounds shocking; but what happened once might happen again and I will not marry you until I am sure—very sure, that I love you; and still more that I trust you implicitly anywhere, and under any circumstances. You must feel the same in regard to me. The condition is this: that you agree to

spend a month at Les Quatre Vents while I am there. We will each be willing and ready to meet others; and if we find that another wins our heart—good and well. Better to discover it now than later on, and if—after our test—we still desire each other, then I will marry you and then only."

As she spoke his mood suddenly changed. He rose, all smiles and bows, and stood before her, his manner almost too elaborate to be convincing. "Just the thing, Alice," he exclaimed with a flourish of his hand "We will go to Les Quatre Vents—the place of the four winds—where the merry breezes, all sorts of merry breezes, blow in and out, perfumed and powdered and whiskeyed, blowing in and out together. A typical place, Alice, where the good and bad, pure and impure, just and unjust, fat and fatter, ugly and uglier, lean and leaner—from the four corners of the earth—form, as you say, 'fashionable society.' The four winds blowing them in to meet us—we will take our pick, desert each other, and live happily with the lucky one forever after. We are sure to meet our fate—sure as the winds blow." He laughed in great amusement at this sally, enjoying to the full her confusion and surprise at his sudden outburst. "You did not know this sort of thing was native

to me, Alice, did you? Just now I have to acknowledge that I am an enigma even to myself, dear; but this little scheme of yours strikes me as jolly full of rare humour. However, seriously speaking, the experiment seems most unnecessary! I enter the race confident of my unchanging allegiance, and well! well! my dear, I have a little scheme which has just entered my head this minute of how I can—”

“Robert, the game must be played fair, no tricks allowed. While there I will be Alice Bell, my maiden name, and you, unattached. We will merely bow as acquaintances; and must not spy on each other—just wait patiently for results—you understand, Robert?”

“Yes,” the big man answered, “I understand as well as it is possible to understand something not understandable; but I am game—and here,” raising his right hand high & waving it, “is success to the venture. May sweet wedding bells be the music to the last act—our wedding bells, Alice.”

“Hush, Robert.”

“No, dear one,” his voice was low and exceedingly tender, “I will not place any stumbling block in your way; you will be free, free as a bird to have your fling—your last fling, Alice—before you marry me.”

CHAPTER II.

As the scene just described took place in the home of Mrs. Alice Bell Wright, New York, the millionaire cotton manufacturer, Guy Forester of Philadelphia sped swiftly along in his luxuriously upholstered limousine to the pretentious mansion he called home. Ten years prior to this Guy Forester had been buyer for the firm of MacLeod & MacIntosh, wholesale dry goods merchants, now he was head of the largest cotton manufacturing business in the country. His father had been professor of mathematics in an English University, and his mother, a daughter of the famous MacNeil MacIver, celebrated tea merchant the world over; herself a woman of shrewd judgment and keen intellect. Her ambition had so inspired him, that finally in giving himself over fully to it, he had cast to the winds everything that did not in some way further this one absorbing desire. Figuratively speaking the "bit" he had taken between his teeth, was hard work and concentration, while controlling this was a farseeing intelligence which could be relied upon to swerve him right or left in the winning direction.

During the years of uphill climbing he had refused alike, pleasure, vacation, and any form of relaxation which would draw his attention away from his business, and he had been blind to his loss. Lately however, awakening to a full consciousness of it, he discovered that even a strong constitution cannot be constantly drained of its reserve energy without in time showing the marks of wear.

One very evident indication of this strain, was the unnatural mental depression evidenced during the last two weeks, which had coupled with it a continual physical weariness and apathy most foreign to him. Worse still this personal condition had begun to affect his business as well as his private matters. In the office he found himself irritable without sufficient provocation. In short his present disposition pointed strongly to nerves. Three years previous he had married Lillian Williams, daughter of Stephen Williams, the "Tobacco King." His courtship and marriage had been the one rash act of his life. Within thirty days after first meeting her, he had fallen in love, courted and married her. A whirlwind campaign so sudden in its inspiration, and decisive in its results, that it amazed and awed even himself as well as his friends. It displayed a rashness that scarcely a MacIver

could be guilty of, unless for a moment he had forgotten a habit of lifelong prudence. However, account for it as you will, when love knocked, he opened wide the doors without first peeping through the key hole, and he had not regretted it.

Lillian Forester, although the spoiled beautiful only child of an indulgent father and a vain mother, had graced his home and satisfied his heart as well as any man could desire. Since the honeymoon, that old habit of "Business first, last and always" had re-asserted itself, demanding all its former allegiance, to the extent that after the first glamour of love had worn away, his home became to him, much as a theatre to a moderate purse, a luxury to be enjoyed only when finance permitted. Of late there had been "differences," spoken words, better unsaid, and unutterable things insinuated.

Speeding along in the gathering dusk, he leaned back into the soft cushions and closed his eyes in pure physical weariness. Mentally, he had revived almost to a state of exultation, but as it was not his habit to show, by outward demonstration, any inward exuberance of spirit, no one could have guessed that unrestrained by physical weariness, his mind alert and keen, jumped from one detail to another, planning and arranging his first vacation in years.

All this change had taken place because of an "open door." Through this "open door" he had seen his way to the pleasure and rest of a two months' holiday. Though for some time cognizant of the great need for it, until now there seemed no possibility of realizing it. Then suddenly this "open door," and now after waiving his business "good bye" for two months, he was speeding home to tell Lillian all about it.

The year following their marriage her father died, and lonesome and weary, she begged him to take her away, abroad, down to the sea, anywhere to be together again, as they had been during those few brief months of their honeymoon. He could not humour her then, business had needed him, she must wait, and she had waited lonely and discontented and a little bitter. This continual denial of himself to her now rose before his vision as a cloud.

He had perhaps been wrong about it, but now, they would go away together, anywhere she desired, it mattered not to him. He felt sure that short notice was all that would be necessary; for Lillian had always been "game." "Dear girl, I'll make it up to you now," he whispered to himself. As he mounted the long steps leading to the elaborate entrance of his home, he was surprised to find much of that physical weariness

driven away by the joy within. The old spring came back to his step, and the glisten to his eye. On the way to his wife's sitting room, he halted by the cage of a canary bird, to listen to the sweetest song he had ever heard it sing, and concluded, that "Joy was man's rightful heritage."

His wife and her mother were seated near the open window through which was wafted the faint scent of flowers.

He entered the room softly, thinking to surprise them, perhaps they had not heard him; he moved nearer and stood before them and looked down tenderly at his wife, as she bent over her fancy work.

Neither greeted him, or heeded his presence, or evinced surprise or pleasure at his early arrival.

Suddenly a chill struck him; the room was cold, the sun had gone under a cloud. The little bird in the hall ceased warbling, its burst of joy was over. Such an unnatural situation pointed to something wrong; what was it? As he stood waiting, a great depression seized him. He felt weary, almost to the point of exhaustion. At last he could contain himself no longer.

"Lillian, are you petrified?" His tone was as cold as the chill he experienced.

At this, his mother-in-law, Mrs. Williams,

threw him a glance of such disdain and intolerance, that he felt as though someone had struck him in the dark.

"I am ill," his wife answered in a voice that trembled.

He was all penitence, "Sick Lillian—you sick—and I did not know it." He bent down to kiss her.

She turned her head away, "Don't kiss me, I can't stand it."

He had revived quickly, "Why dear—what is the trouble? Whatever it is it will soon be cured, for I have a surprise for you. I have just planned a trip for us, a holiday, Lillian, that holiday you have waited for so long. The way is now clear to take it. I came home early to tell you about it. In a few days, when we get away—anywhere you say—you will be better again. What is it, dear—tell me? Is it one of your old-time headaches?"

She had stiffened and now looked up, staring at him coldly.

"No, this time my head is not so much affected as my heart."

His spirit of exultation, though suffering a sudden chill, had warmed again at what seemed a call from her. Now, he felt like a man smitten. The mental and physical depression of the

last few weeks, returned as a wave engulfing him and stripping him of everything worth while, at the same time, chilling and freezing him to the heart.

In Lillian's eyes was a challenge, he read it at first sight. Her icy reserve and tone of bitterness meant something unkind, antagonistic. Could it be the result of pent up emotions, which he, in his ignorance, had been guilty of encouraging by his neglect of her?

With one mighty effort, he wished to clear himself before her, for all those months of neglect and thoughtlessness. By a few words to regain what had taken so long to lose; through a moment of apology to wipe off the error of years.

"Lillian," he braced himself for the effort, for to him an apology was a personal sacrifice. "I have been a cad, and I know it. Forget it all and let us begin again."

The uselessness of it was all too apparent before she spoke. He knew he was to be rebuffed, an influence had been at work against him; some subtle, stinging thing had crept in, and was lying in wait for him. Instinctively he recognized the necessity for defence. Defence against this stealthy horrible intruder, which he felt would soon show its face; a monster out of the darkness of yesterday and to-day.

His wife's voice came to him now as something sinister and cruel.

"What a novel idea, Guy, requesting me to forget it, when mother and I have spent all afternoon in trying to remember—everything."

In the morning his wife had smiled "good-bye." Now just a few short hours between, and she surveyed him as a judge does the prisoner in the box. The reference to her mother astounded him. Surely they had not together discussed him and his faults, as though endeavouring to prove something against him? Thinking this, he became angry. What right had they to do such a thing? It was unfair.

His neglect of Lillian warranted, perhaps, a little bitterness on her part, but this was cruel, especially just now when his nerves were going —she knew that. It was like whipping a dog when he was down. Never before had he lost his temper completely with her, but now in the face of this awful injustice he flew into a rage. He plunged his hands deep into his pockets and stood a pace back from her chair while he snapped out: "And what right have you and your mother to discuss my actions, I wish to inquire?"

At this Lillian and her mother looked up sharply. "You do not intend defending yourself, surely," his wife retorted disdainfully.

"Defend myself!" he exclaimed in amazement, "I asked your pardon for the neglect of the past years, Lillian, and offered to make amends, but you rebuffed me, and treat me as though I were a criminal. It is unjust—something is at the bottom of all this. I demand to know what it is."

"Don't play the hypocrite," was the cutting reply. "Surely you are better aware of your own actions than anyone else."

"Yes, I am, and more, I can defend myself against anything; so what is the charge you two idle, gossiping women have to bring against me?" His anger was approaching full tide.

His wife's face was as pale as his own, but she looked up at him and laughed shrilly. "It is amusing, isn't it, mother, to be called idle and gossiping, by one who has surely been just as idle at times; as for gossiping, there are more evil modes of conversing."

He moved close to her and his voice became threatening. "Lillian, I demand an explanation."

She rose and faced him, "You have no time for me, business always has the first claim, so you say. To-day, mother heard what has been the real cause of your neglect." Her eyes blazed and she snapped the words. "And the real cause

is a very pretty woman with whom you have been taking your lunch on several occasions, and not business."

"You lie."

"We will see, answer this, please. Did you lunch on Monday at MacLeod's?"

"I did."

"Accompanied by a young lady with dark hair and blue eyes?"

He paused to reflect—so this was it—he remembered the incident now. "Yes," he replied, deliberately. "I dined that day with a woman and very probably she was pretty, with dark hair and blue eyes. What do you wish to make of it?"

"You are in the habit of meeting her there?"

"I am not."

"You have met her there before?"

"Once, I believe."

"Two weeks ago?"

"About that time."

"You remember each time?"

"Now, Lillian, this has gone far enough. I will listen to no more of your vulgar insinuations. The woman I met is a woman who runs her own business—a very clever person. We have had business dealings with her for years, and by mere accident I happened to run across

her two weeks ago, and again on Monday. We were seated at the same table and naturally fell into conversation—that was all there was to it."

"You cannot spare the time to motor home for lunch, yet on Monday you spent an hour talking to this woman—and you say that is all there is to it."

"And I repeat it."

"Well, I do not believe you; because you were noticed to be very attentive to her, accompanying her out; besides, she appeared to take your attention for granted."

"Your informant has a mind as yellow as a lemon rind—and as bitter. My first wonder is that your mother would listen to her, and next, that you could both so readily believe it."

"It explains absolutely your growing indifference, which we could not otherwise understand." His wife's tone smote hard.

"I have told you the circumstances truthfully, I will not defend myself for that would be to acknowledge the need of it. On both occasions the meeting was purely accidental. I acted only as any gentleman would have, under the circumstances—and there is nothing more to say."

"If both meetings were so purely accidental, how do you remember every detail in regard to them? They must have been of special significance to be retained in such a busy mind."

"Your irony is cutting," he retorted, "and I appreciate to the full the faith you have in me."

"You attempt, by reproaching us on the matter of faith, to avoid the real issue."

"Your mind is just as yellow as that of your mother's informant." He threw back, roused by her doubt of him, to an anger that disregarded consequences. "I have stood just about enough of this, Lillian; I deny nothing, for there is nothing to deny. My only sin against you has been neglect, caused from purely business demands, for which I have already expressed my regret, and for which I do not intend offering further apology. I am going away for a much-needed rest, and ask again—will you come with me?"

Her suspicion of him had carried her on to where every word that he uttered in explanation but tended to intensify that jealousy. "Your invitation has come too late. No, I will not go with you; you can go alone, and the memory of those secret meetings with the pretty, blue-eyed enchantress will no doubt contribute much to your happiness."

"You mean to charge me with an infatuation for this woman?" he broke out, his wrath rising to a fury.

"I do—and an infatuation which has kept you

away from your home when I needed you most." Her anger blazed high.

"You mean that you will not accompany me?"

"I do."

"You accuse me of this contemptible thing—you have the magnificent affront to charge me with unfaithfulness to you?"

"You understand me perfectly."

"Hear this then," he blazed forth, "I will never ask you again—I will leave as soon as my grip is packed for—God knows where—anywhere away from you and your contemptible suspicion. Where, I go, and when I return is my own business entirely. I trust that you and your mother may enjoy many more afternoons, during my absence, spent in the same profitable manner. Perhaps you could add to your number the lemon rind woman—d—m her," he ended, turning on his heel and slamming the door behind him.

Half an hour later, Guy Forester's car drove down the drive, and out through the gate into the street, where it was lost to view in the gathering shadows of the coming night.

CHAPTER III.

As Guy Forester's car drove through the night, breaking all speed laws, in his desire to discover a more congenial atmosphere than that of his own home, a very vexing incident occurred at the residence of Mrs. Josiah Grimes of Boston, widow of the late (late five years) notorious money lender Josiah Grimes, popularly known as "Grinning Joe."

The grin for which Josiah was famous, bore no resemblance to the ordinary interpretation of the word, but just as a wolf reveals by the snarling mouth and flash of teeth the inherent lust within, this grin of Josiah Grimes, revealed the cruel and avaricious nature of the man. His thin lips when spread had the appearance of a scar, which in the rebound became a snarl. He was feared and hated alike because of it. "Justice without mercy," was his slogan. To borrow money from him was to fall into a snare, the rope of which became gradually tightened around the victim's neck. At the time of Josiah's death, the best that could be said of Mrs. Grimes was that she was a foolish little woman. A few years of responsibility proved such a verdict to

be merely complimentary. As a reaction she developed a magnificent extravagance, not so much to be wondered at, for during her husband's life, the extent of his wealth had been kept secret from her, so that the reading of his will proved more of a surprise to her than it did to the general public.

One of the first extravagances she coveted, was a platinum necklace set with real pearls, valued at the sum of one thousand six hundred dollars. However, after acquiring this treasure, a great difficulty arose, that of guarding it. A suitable iron box was found for it, and every night after the blind was drawn, the jewels were locked within and the box slipped far under the mattress of her bed. In the daytime, when not wearing it, she kept it sewed up in a little bag, which was securely fastened inside the upper portion of her corsets.

On the night preceding the day in question, she had employed the same carefulness in hiding her treasure as usual, yet on opening the box the following day, discovered the necklace to be gone.

As it happened, Miss Alice Bell, the governess Mrs Grimes had lately employed to teach her three children, Martha, Ruth, and Moses (Josiah had been partial to Biblical names) had

two weeks previous given notice of leave, on the plea of ill health, and just that day had gone off with bag and baggage to some seaside resort, hoping by so doing to regain the strength she had lost through the winter's hard work and confinement. Suspicion at once fell upon her. Immediately everyone in the house was questioned as to Miss Bell's destination, without satisfactory results, for although everyone guessed, no one knew, just where the late governess had gone—and the mystery deepened.

After spending many wearisome hours in fruitless surmising and searching, sighing and crying, a card was found under the dresser in the room lately occupied by the governess bearing the address "Les Quatre Vents, Rainbow Bay." This then was Miss Bell's destination. The first ray of hope shone through the darkness, there was now some clue to work on. After much controversy, it was decided to place the case in the hands of a detective and Mrs. Grimes at once interviewed the Haynes Detective Agency, with the result that "a gentleman" was immediately dispatched to her home to inquire into the mystery of the stolen necklace.

This gentleman's name was Thomas Timothy Timmins, better known among his colleagues as Winkler. A nickname given him because of

his peculiar habit of winking his right eye and clicking his right thumb, in unison with the discovery of a clue. He was a dapper little fellow, inclined to be somewhat corpulent, a fact probably due in part to the pompous, leisurely manner in which he proceeded to unravel the tangles of mystery. His raven hair was parted precisely in the middle, and well brushed back from his forehead while his dark moustache was waxed very properly at either end. He impressed Mrs. Grimes as being a very superior person, and she proceeded at once to inform him of her suspicion in regard to her late governess.

"Yes, yes" assented the detective. "But have you ever, on any previous occasion, had cause to suspect this woman?"

"No," Mrs. Grimes conceded lamely, "though I have had her in my employ but a short time."

"Just how long?"

"To be exact, since last September, but I never trusted her, now when I think of it, I know that I never trusted her. There was something peculiar about her—I don't know."

"Just so, Mrs. Grimes, this is interesting; but I would like to get at the facts. Now let us begin at the beginning after this manner. Did you advertise for a governess or secure her services through friends?"

"Why such a question—I always do my own advertising—I believe in being independent—letting my neighbours know as little as possible about private affairs. Josiah always told me to 'keep my mouth shut about our concerns' and Josiah—"

"Precisely—just so," commented Winkler (we will call him that, as his friends did for short) "I understand you advertised for a governess and Miss Bell answered the advertisement."

"Well, no not exactly, it happened like this. One night my boy Moses—Josiah named him that because he always had a liking for Moses, because of the commandments—Josiah was strong on the commandments—Josiah knew the Bible off well nigh by heart—and I often—"

"Pardon me Mrs. Grimes," broke in the servant of the law politely. "Would you tell me in as few words as possible, just how you secured the services of your late governess?" He moved rather uneasily in his chair and puckered his brow.

"Indeed, I'll gladly do that, anything to help you get my precious necklace back, I should never have bought it. I had the feeling it would be stolen from me. Haven't I seen envious eyes on it every time I've worn it, and I've had it only a week. Wouldn't Josiah turn in his

grave if he knew?" Here tears showed in the eyes of the penitent widow. "He'd never get over me spending all that money on a thing, and then having it took."

Winkler's usual placid noncommittal countenance began to show signs of vexation of spirit, and he imagined he knew the reason why he had never married. "Now, Mrs. Grimes," he decided to make a fresh start, "I will ask a more direct question, did this Alice Bell have good references?"

"They read all right," she replied with spirit, "but laws—more than likely they were fakes—it's often done and Josiah always said, 'Count every man a rogue till you prove him otherwise.' I've found it a good policy to work on—now since—"

Another interruption from the law, "Did you find her honest in every other respect?"

"W always thought so," she conceded slowly, "but since this thing has happened both Moses and the girls—Martha and Ruth their names are—remember little things they have missed from time to time."

"Such as?"

"Oh, well—just little things—hardly worth mentioning—yet as Josiah always said, 'A feather'll show which way the wind blows.' "

"I would like to know just what articles you missed, it might give us an idea of her taste."

"She had quiet taste—in fact no taste at all. She was too plain altogether."

"Can you remember what things you missed?"
He pursued the fleeting shadow.

"No—to be truthful, I can't—only we all remember missing things now and then, but—"

Winkler decided to take another trail. "Did this Alice Bell leave before her time was up?"

"No—she was to have gone the day before yesterday, but my new governess could not come till to-day—so I asked her to stay over."

"Did you pay her for the extra time?"

"Why laws no—of course not—who'd think of paying for an extra day or two—"

Just here Winkler winked his right eye, and snapped his right thumb, then jotted something down in a little red note book, which he took from a pocket in the lining of his vest. "Now we are getting a start," was his comment.

"Do you remember ever hearing Miss Bell express her ideas in relation to the attitude of employer to employee in regard to wage matters?"

"You mean did she believe in getting all the pay coming to her?"

"Well something like that."

"I should just say that she did—when I engaged her I suggested paying her every three months—but my lady would have none of it. She wanted her money every month just like any ordinary help."

"Did she have anyone dependent upon her?"

"She said she had to support her mother,—they were only poor people."

Here Winkler winked, and snapped, again, while another bit of incriminating evidence was jotted in the note book—a motive for the crime. He threw the questions quickly at her now, jotting the replies.

"Did Miss Bell know of your hiding place for the jewels?"

"Yes, I showed her the iron box when I bought it."

"Did she make any comment?"

"Yes—she said that it looked like a simple enough lock to pick if anyone had a mind to."

Another wink, and snap, from Winkler while the frown on his brow gave place to that expression of self-satisfied complaisance so characteristic of him.

"Did she know of your hiding place for the key?"

"I didn't tell her—but Moses knew, and may have let it out, or perhaps she overheard something. She was always at one's heels."

"Was she a sound sleeper?"

"Anything but that—the least sound wakened her—Josiah always said 'A sign of a guilty conscience.' "

"Are you a sound sleeper?"

"Sound as a rock—Josiah always—"

"Was the key in the same place under the mat-tress in the morning?"

"No—decidedly not—there is always a weak link somewhere—and that is where she made her mistake—it was a little—just a shade—further down."

"Are you sure of that?"

"Positive."

"Did she seem excited at the last—anxious to get away—ill at ease?"

"You just believe she was," this with decided emphasis, "but deceitful-like, she made out she had mistaken the time for her train—and left in an awful flurry."

"Thank you—now for her description Mrs. Grimes—yes—pretty girl—dark fluffy hair—blue eyes—slight—medium height—plainly dressed in blue suit—but will likely use a dis-guise. Did you ever see any of her friends?"

"She had none—except a young widow?"

"Excellent disguise—" was Winkler's com-ment as he rose from his chair, posed somewhat

pompously before her, slipped the note book into his inner vest pocket and resumed. "Now, Mrs. Grimes, leave it to me—as I dress in plain clothes—no uniform—she will not suspect me, and I promise to get her all right. You understand that the only evidence against her so far is purely circumstantial. It will be necessary for me to obtain more incriminating evidence, before I can lay the hand of the law upon her, but trust me, to have your pearls back in your possession, and the thief under lock and key in short order. This card of address is a fortunate find; but for it our work would be much more complicated. I will follow her there immediately—watch her every move—she'll make a slip—they all do—even the cleverest of them. I've rounded up this sort of criminal many times and know their tricks, but they don't know mine, see." The detective's face shone with the pride of past achievement, his voice rang with conviction and his dark eyes glistened with the expectant joy of future victory.

"The hussy," said Mrs. Grimes, indignantly, "to think that she would steal my pearls,—a public example should be made of her. If Josiah were only here he'd see to it that she got her deserts—Josiah's strong point was justice."

"Yes—that's what we stand for too, Mrs.

Grimes, though in my opinion it's none the worse to be tempered with mercy."

"I don't want any mercy shown her, Mr. Timmins, she stole the pearls and it is only according to the law and commandments, that she suffer for it. Josiah always said that a man who would show mercy was making a criminal, not helping one—for as soon as the iellow was up, 'He'd do you again.'"

"I'll say good evening," ventured Winkler as she paused a moment. "The head office will keep you informed as to how things are moving." Then offering his hand, "Let us hope for luck, Mrs. Grimes."

"I forgot to say," added Josiah's widow, "that Moses heard this woman speak to her friend, the widow, of a lover—something about being too poor to marry, and how she worried about it."

"A lover! Uh-huh," exclaimed Winkler with his characteristic wink and snap, "I'll remember that."

"Of course, he may not have been her lover," Mrs. Grimes called, but he did not hear.

On gaining the street he stood a moment at the corner under the lamp—took out his little red note book, and jotted something in it, then carefully placed it back again, buttoned over his coat, and with a wink and a snap, started off at an easy gate down the street.

As he proceeded on his way, evidently a certain review was taking place in his mind, for he muttered quite audibly "Whizz it, but just wasn't Josiah a sly old boy."

CHAPTER IV.

After Guy Forester's sudden and defiant leave taking, his wife and mother-in-law stared each other in frightened bewilderment. The mean suspicion which had developed so rapidly, into a consuming passion of unreasonable jealousy was like a fog before Lillian Forester's eyes, through which the light of truth could not penetrate. Her vision was so blinded by it that everything became swallowed up in the general murkiness. She had struck out to hurt, and had herself been wounded, and now she sat confused and dumbfounded for a moment, unable to speak or utter any comment on this most startling development.

The truth of the matter was, that Guy Forester had neglected his home, his wife, and his own health, in following the illusive phantom of wealth, and had become its slave. One ambitious venture led to another still greater and more engrossing, until his business had grown to such proportions, that his very success threatened to swamp him. More and more it demanded his best, and exacted his reserve of nerve and energy, until now this creature of his own making, the visible result of his handiwork,

threatened to rob him of health, and with all the force of its relentless passion to steal that from him which he valued most—his wife's affection.

Because Lillian Forester had been pampered in selfish indulgence all her life, her vision included only those influences which contributed to her personal happiness or misery. Everything was judged only as it touched or failed to touch the comfort of her existence.

Limited to such a narrow vision, the eyes of her imagination suspiciously peered into the darkness around her, out of which seemed to come forth creatures evil and menacing.

Her husband had denied her the right to an intimate acquaintance with himself. She knew only what the world knew of him. He allowed her the knowledge of his absorbing ambition without revealing to her the uprightness of character behind it. She felt his strength without understanding its source. Consequently as her vision focused more and more into herself, and his activities claimed more and more of himself, and his time, they drifted farther and farther apart until becoming lost to each other in a sea of mist, they had neither the comfort of one another, or the hope of a safe landing place.

The suspicion that had been gradually creep-

ing into her thoughts of him had, at the first turn of the wind, burst into flame. At the first breath of gossip she doubted him. This doubt soon grew into conviction, and with all faith gone for the time being, her mind easily became a dumping ground for all sorts of evil imaginings. Once voiced, they assumed real form, and as such led her at will, she cared not whither.

Mrs. Williams was the first to speak: "He will not go dear—I know men better than you do." She moved uneasily in the high backed rocker and toyed nervously with the fringe of her black satin gown.

"I don't care—I hope he does." Her daughter declared defiantly.

"But it will make such a talk, Lillian."

"What does that matter? It's nobody's business but ours. The shame is that Guy should have acted so with that awful woman."

"It may not have been true," suggested her mother, weakening as all tale-bearers do in the face of the tragedy they have created, "Guy's words rather gave the lie to it I thought."

"You may think so, but I do not. If you believe there is so little truth in it, why in heaven's name did you repeat it? You come with this wretched story, argue me into believing that it explains Guy's neglect—supplying a motive

other than business—and now, when you see the trouble you have caused try to take it all back. I am almost crazy; this will be the end of everything."

"Well, well," soothed her mother, "It was unfortunate that Madge mentioned the thing to me, but if it has any truth in it, I thought you had a right to know. Now if your father were only living, he'd ferret this thing to the bottom, and find out for himself the value of it."

"Perhaps he would—but, mother, if there is any ferreting to do, I'll do it. Guy doesn't need to think that he can pull a blind over my eyes. I surmised something wrong long ago and now I'm sure of it."

Just then the noise of the car was heard on the drive and the next moment it drove away, while the two women at the window upstairs watched it disappear into the haze of the gathering night.

"You see—he has gone," stormed Lillian, "and you said he wouldn't. You think you know more about men than I do. Perhaps you do, but you don't know Guy; but—neither do I—that's just the trouble. We live together as strangers—or as good as that."

"What a muddle! Dear me, what a muddle!" exclaimed her mother with a sigh. "What a scandal it will make, I thought you were too severe Lillian—you are so unreasonable."

"Too severe, unreasonable," reiterated her daughter in amazement. "Mother you play with words. Either there is truth in the story and Guy is leading a double life or it is all utterly false. I must know one thing or the other."

"You come by that spirit naturally from your father. I haven't much of it—it makes a mountain of a mole hill."

"Mother, you first listened to the gossip then carried it to me. It has aroused me—that's all. I have been asleep since father died and Guy has taken advantage of my drowsiness. My sudden awakening may do a lot of damage; it may mean the end of happiness for me, but even though it ruin my life and his too I must know the truth—and I will know it." A new defiance and determination had arisen with the hour.

"I feel that you are going to make a terrible fuss—just like your father used to raise over the simplest matter. Why can't you forget it?" Mrs. Williams was steadily weakening.

"Your appeal comes too late, mother. You can't stay the storm you've aroused by pouring on a little oil. I am just beginning to understand a little of life. Up to now I have been living in a doll's house filled with all sorts of flip-

pery and vanities to please me but nothing real in it. Now I am going to understand what real living means and the first thing is, to discover the truth about Guy."

"Impossible—quite impossible," Mrs. Williams retorted more confidently. "The deeper you dig, the darker the hole—men weren't made to be investigated. True, Guy may have been guilty of some slight indiscretion but what of that. Every man likes a pretty face—"

"Mother, I blush for you. Women like you do not expect a man to be decent; that's why so many of them fail. They have no one's trust to live up to. For years I have lived in the dark; now a window has been suddenly opened revealing Guy as he really is, and myself, as I am. I have been selfish, thinking only of my own loneliness, gradually growing more unattractive, and Guy has gone elsewhere for cheer." Lillian's voice broke and she hid her face in her hands and wept.

Mrs. Williams had no solace to offer. Any demonstration of grief always embarrassed her; she resented "fusses," or any departure from the smooth continuity of unruffled days. Scenes!—how she loathed them.

And all this the result of a simple little story—a bit of gossip; a low-voiced, pink-shaded

slander; just a soft-fingered stripping of character; a mere laugh, and a look; a lift of the eyebrows and a whispered word and then, oh! a mere bagatelle. But how the winds carry these soft-voiced whispers, spreading and trailing them, twisting and turning them, blowing them into storm clouds and hurricanes. As the winds strip nature of leaves and flowers, so slander with one sweep turns a rose bush into a thorn tree.

Guy's wife sobbed on and her mother stood by nervously shifting her gaze from one object to another in her endeavour to think of something to say that would end it all. Finally sighing, as though she were the oppressed and her daughter the oppressor: "Lillian you are making me miserable. This crying is most distressing. Hush! for heaven's sake, hush!"

"I know," sobbed on Lillian, "I hate crying, but I have to—anyway you're not suffering; I am. You started the racket and now you find the result embarrassing."

"You might as well cease; crying will benefit you nothing."

"I know, but it may wash some sand out of my eyes."

"Such a scene," complained her mother, usurping her parental authority, "go to your room, Lillian, and bathe your eyes with cold

water to remove all trace of that foolish weeping, before the servants see you. It must be dinner time, and, for heaven's sake, give them nothing to talk about."

"Mother—just one moment," dictated her daughter, the sobbing now ceased. "I think the mists are clearing away and in the new light, I see a road calling to me, leading me on—"

"Don't veil your meaning in such language child," Mrs. Williams chided irritably. "At times you are so much like your father. He used to puzzle me by talking about 'roads calling,' and 'winds murmuring.' Don't cultivate that tendency, please."

"I wish I were more like him," his daughter replied thoughtfully. Her manner was now calm, like the unnatural calm following a storm, and she eyed her mother critically.

"Why do you stare at me, Lillian?" her mother questioned very much ill at ease.

"Where is that widow's bonnet of yours—the one you wore last season?" was the astonishing rejoinder.

Mrs. Williams smiled. "That's nice—I thought you'd be sensible and forget it—you are tactful too like your father—and could readily cultivate that trait if you tried. Why do you ask about last summer's bonnet—do you not like

my new one? I intended consulting you about it."

"Yes I like the new one and am glad that you have it—because I want the old one, the real widow's bonnet with the frill of white under the brim, only I'm going to rip the white off."

This was astonishing.

"Are you crazy child? What new madness is this?" Mrs. Williams was becoming excited.

"Just this," answered her daughter sharply, "I am going to discover Guy's whereabouts—follow and watch him. No—please don't interrupt, mother. I am a married woman and my own mistress. Nothing you can say will alter my decision. I want your widow's bonnet and veil, you must let me have them; if you don't I'll get another disguise, but I am going for I'm convinced that this whole thing is put up by Guy as a blind. Clever isn't it? But not quite clever enough,—in order to run off with this woman, where they can enjoy a happy carefree time together—free from prying eyes." Lilian's voice snapped off the last words as she stood beside her mother's chair in an attitude of command.

"You are just like your father," that lady commented, helplessly. "He cut and dried everything in the same way—I really don't know who

I am or what to do when you speak like that. I lose all strength to resist you."

Then as the spoiled child realized her mother's helplessness, she proceeded to dictate "My strength weakens you mother; that's what you mean. You'll get those things for me tonight, won't you? I have to have them. You don't want me to be fooled by Guy do you? He seems to have forgotten that I am the daughter of Stephen Williams—so have I lately—but I've remembered now and I must show him that he can't fool a daughter of Stephen Williams and go unpunished. Then I want this pretty blue-eyed flirt, the clever business woman, this thief who has robbed me, to know who I am. We'll teach her something before we get through with her won't we, mother?"

And the mother could not but agree as the daughter of Stephen Williams dictated, for the strength of the one but strengthened the weakness in the other, if such an analogy be permitted me.

CHAPTER V.

On the coast of Massachussets, between Massachussets Bay and Newport in the middle of the seventeenth century, one Samuel Barker erected a country house of some pretensions for those days. The House was a two storied building, windowed and gabled, with a second story piazza, overhanging roof, and huge chimney. This gentleman knight of the old days counted among his ancestors famous British generals and commanders, who sailed the seas to plant the flag of England upon the shores of the New World.

Samuel Barker was an ardent loyalist, and during the revolutionary days this fine country house of his became the secret meeting place of those who strove to defeat the colony's cause. However, in the year 1777 the conspirators were discovered, the house seized by the revolutionists, and in turn used by them as a base. It was here that a "look out" was stationed to watch the seas for those marauding parties of British from New York and Newport who harassed the New England Coast for so long.

But because of a traitor in their midst information was sold to the enemy which resulted in the

capture of the place and its temporary abandonment. Later on it fell into the hands of a noble gentleman, cousin to Governor Hancock who had the distinguished honour of entertaining both Washington and Lafayette. It was Lafayette who, with his fine temper, warm enthusiasm, and gracious presence, while accepting the entertainment of his host, consented to suggest a name for the place.

The House stood on a promontory, jutting out into the sea. Grand old trees of white pine that had withstood the four winds for years, guarded and sheltered it on all sides, while hemlock and spruce wooded the rounded slope which ran down to the high water mark. This with the jagged rocks which everywhere showed their gray between the green, presented a picture of solitary and isolated grandeur. The promontory stood as a grand old sentinel guarding her country against the assault of the enemy, while the fine new England home it sheltered, weathered the storms of those pioneer days with an imposing dignity which no change in fortune completely destroyed. *Les Quatre Vents*, "Place of the four winds," was the name given it by that gallant chevalier of France, Lafayette, and by such it was known for many years after the storm clouds drifted away, and our stalwart

New England forefather's sheathed their swords and hoisted high the flag of victory.

Passing into numerous hands during the intervening century it served many purposes but none that deprived it of its traditional dignity, and the story of *Les Quatre Vents*, has retained since those days its own particular distinction among the much loved tales of early colonial life so dear to the heart of every New Englander.

Late in the last century it fell into the hands of a commercial syndicate, and because of its manifest advantages as a site for a summer hotel, was torn down, and in the place of the old gray landmark, grew up a product of our present day civilization.

The name *Les Quatre Vents*, "Place of the Four Winds," in its old fashioned lettering was preserved, reinforced, gilded anew, and placed above the imposing entrance which travelers claim commanded the finest view of the ocean to be found anywhere on the New England coast.

Around *Les Quatre Vents*, the four winds of heaven played and whistled and raged as they had for centuries past, and travelers seeking help, diversion, and rest, gathered within its walls from every land, soon making famous this New England pleasure resort, which in the midst of a modern world gallantly endeavoured

to uphold its time-honoured tradition for hospitality. A hospitality that now reeked with as little of present day commercialism as was possible, and this tactfully concealed under the old-fashioned title of "courtesy."

The structure itself was a spreading, rather than an elevated one, although the turreted roof which allowed of a centre tower for observation raised its pinnacles high above the surrounding pines and added a sufficient loftiness to the already imposing site. Seaweed strewn with shells and fossils covered the rocks directly below, while in a slightly northerly direction little paths led through a forest of white pine and hemlock, to the expanse of smooth sandy beach that curved further inland, then out again, meeting a mile distant another jutting promontory, which completed the natural arch-like inlet of the sea, called Rainbow Bay.

Here the land rolled down into a densely-wooded valley, rising higher again as it curved and ran out into the sea. With such a wealth of natural beauty surrounding it on all sides, and a management pledged to the pleasure and comfort of its guests, *Les Quatre Vents* could not but become a seaside resort of great note and elegance.

It was to this much famed spot that Guy For-

ester had hoped to motor with his wife to spend their long anticipated holiday. A holiday which to his fevered imagination promised as an oasis to the thirsty traveler, sweet rest after months of weariness. With Lillian he would enter again upon that old sweet fellowship which had for so long been denied them.

But this day dream of his had vanished the night of his defiant leave taking, when the storm gates of his wife's pent up wrath and jealousy opened, and had followed a scene which viewed in the light of his present action, and future determination bore all the appearance of a tragedy. He had come to the conclusion, that in order to bring his wife to her senses, drastic measures must be resorted to, and he knew of nothing more drastic than that which he had already adopted. He had left her and would remain away until repentance took hold of her conscience. Then after granting her forgiveness, together they would start all over again.

The thought that Lillian might not realize her error, or that his innocence would not be established never entered into his mind. He was a son of a MacIver, and by charging him with an unmentionable offense and doubting his word Lillian had insulted the proud name which he bore. Her sin was a double one against him.

The spirit of his Scottish forefathers breathed again within him. The pride of his clan pulsed through his veins and became the dominating factor influencing him.

All tender consideration for her had been pushed out of sight for the time being, away down in some small corner of his heart. His MacIver ego pressed it down, and down it would remain.

As his car sped on its way through the night, to that fashionable pleasure resort Les Quatre Vents he experienced no feeling in his heart but that old, primeval one of "an eye for an eye." Lillian had done wrong and she must suffer. He was not conscious of personal pain, and would have denied an ache in his heart, in fact his heart played no part in the argument whatever. The situation called for but clear-headed logic, and the judgment of a MacIver was indisputable. The thought of justice for "Lillian, the offender," had so taken possession of his mind that all sense of his own responsibility in connection with the unfortunate affair, escaped him entirely. His former mood of self condemnation was completely forgotten, so great was the reaction from which he now suffered.

As his car approached the drive leading up to that Hotel de Luxe the lights of Les Quatre

Vents glimmered dimly through the green of the shadowy pines, while there was borne to him on the wings of the midnight wind a sense of sweet peace and rest.

CHAPTER VI.

"It is just as I thought mother, Felix (the gardner) says Tom (the chauffeur) told him that Guy's destination was Les Quatre Vents. He tried to give us the impression that his plans were open to change. "Anywhere you say," were his hypocritical words to me—just another blind. I wonder how long he thinks he can fool us mother?" Lillian Forester laughed sharply.

Over night the promise of yesterday had been fulfilled. Guy Forester's wife had awakened, and was now a living, throbbing, pulsing woman, controlling a mind and purpose of her own. She was awake to the real conditions of her life, and through her pulses throbbed the passions of jealousy and revenge. Her mind and purpose was the hurt and humiliation of her husband, and "that woman." She had awakened from an unnatural sleep, to find a bad taste in her mouth.

"You will be sensible Lillian—you won't do anything will you?" Mrs. William's courage had diminished with the small hours and when morning dawned was nowhere to be found.

"You mean—what am I going to do? To that I answer—anything and everything a woman

can do to expose her husband and his lady love. It is my intention to hurt him as he has hurt me, and to rob the blue-eyed flirt—this clever business woman of every ounce of respectability she is foolish enough to believe she possesses. I am convinced that this holiday is a pre-arranged thing between them, that in fact his whole course of action during the past month has been included in the scheme. The more I think of it, the cleverer it becomes. At the same time it is evidence complete of his guilt. That the plans were so cleverly laid and carried out convinces me to what an extent, he is under the power of that devilish creature. Speaking of devils the question is raised whether both should not be so stigmatized?" Lillian's words were like cold steel.

With the awakening had come that exclusion of her finer sensibilities, and the assertion of a self reliance inspired by passion.

"You are like your father," her helpless mother remarked wearily. "The men used to fear him when he got like that—bullying makes a worm of a coward, but Guy is no coward; he is an equal for you. I am helpless; your father took all my character from me. I spoke and lived as he dictated and in the end it seemed to me that even my thoughts were his. Now I

haven't enough of myself left to even know what I want." A few tears trickled slowly from the faded eyes—eyes that on one pretext or another had done their share of weeping long ago. "Still your father was a rich man," the mother went on without any apparent emotion. "The world called him a King—the Tobacco King, King of Tobacco—and sometimes I think he was like it. The strength of him just smoke after all, and the only legacy he left—rich food and fine clothes."

"If I am like my father," the daughter asserted emphatically. "I am glad of it. He was a great man because he controlled men. He was the big boss—they did as he ordered and were afraid not to. He ruled all the little ones—they had to meet his terms or quit. He was a man of character, an autocrat in his own way. I am going to try to be like him; I am going to rule, too; and if life doesn't send things my way, I'll make it." She snapped her fingers in a new impertinence, then noting her mother's tears said more gently, "I'm sorry mother if father took your will power from you; but he thought he had the right to do whatever he liked with people. You should have been glad to be bossed by a man like father."

"Would you like to be bossed—would you like

to think, and move and act as another dictated?" her mother questioned with a slight degree of spirit.

"No, I would not. I could not—for I'm a boss too—I'm his daughter."

"You are and I can do nothing with you."

"Never mind, dear—I know what to do—and how to do it."

"So did your father."

"And I'm going to do it; it will bring Guy to his senses. After lunch, dressed in your widow's clothes, I'll be a real mourner—and the afternoon train will take me to that little flag station called Pine Hill where the motors from Les Quatre Vents meet passengers to convey them to that ideal summer resort, where true lovers plan to spend sweet hours together; but it will be under the shadow of the sword in the particular case I have in mind just now, and the sword will fall on their heads when they least expect it. The situation will be an interesting one; free from spying eyes, as he thinks, Guy will reveal his real self and won't it be strange to watch my own husband making love to another woman and looking into her eyes? It will be like coming back to life after being dead a while."

"You will be recognized through your dis-

guise, Lillian. Guy's sharp eyes will penetrate your veil."

"He won't have the chance, Mother; I'll keep behind the curtains; besides I am to be a real black widow—no white to relieve the gloom or attract the curious. My eyelids will droop becomingly and I will be continually wrapped in deep thought."

Such a widow stepped from the train at Pine Hill Station late that evening, and modestly took her place in the large motor car that sped through the woods down the valley, and up the hill to where the lights of Les Quatre Vents glimmered dimly through the shade.

"A room overlooking the promenade?" she requested the clerk at the office.

"Sorry madam—there are no rooms left except in the right wing."

"Any suites?"

"Yes. I can give you a bedroom and sitting room on the second floor."

To this the widow modestly assented.

"Will you register, Madam?" a smiling clerk gently pushed the book towards her.

She took the pen—then hesitated. "Mrs. Guy Forester," was impossible. His name might be on the same page—she dare not look. This situation had not entered into her plans. Her hand trembled and the sympathetic clerk

turned his head away. She felt her cheeks crimson. What should she sign?" One of her friend's names?

"Alice" her best friend—"Alice Bell"—she would sign that.

She gripped the pen in new courage; "Mrs. Alice Bell," she wrote in a large free hand; then, as the boy with her grip made way through the crowd to the elevator—she dared not lift her eyes, lest she should look into those of her husband. She was a novice at the game to-night; to-morrow fresh courage would be hers.

"What relics of the dark ages are widow's weeds!" she complained to the widow in the mirror that night. "Why should losing a husband condemn one to months of such gloom? Death is preferable to living disgrace."

"What would be her story? Had her husband been one John Bell, Barrister? That would do nicely—and she was here to recuperate 'after it all.' Simple enough, wasn't it?"

She left the mirror and stood before the open window looking into the dark green shade of the fragrant pines.

Now and then a glimpse of white flashed between the trees. "Lovers," she scorned. "Fools rather,—perhaps they are there. Oh, well, I'll let them enjoy themselves for a little while—t'will end soon."

CHAPTER VII.

Alice Bell Wright, widow of the late Harold Wright, now seriously considering a second matrimonial venture with the prosperous widower Robert McKay Smith, true to her determination to apply the supreme test to her own affection as well as to her lover's, and holding him honour bound to play the game, consented on the day agreed upon to accompany him only as far as Pine Hill Station. There they separated, each securing a seat in a different motor. Henceforth for the term of the experiment they were to acknowledge each other with a stiff bow as acquaintances only. They were not to spy into each other's affairs, under any circumstance. Trust was to be the dominant note, implicit trust and faith, one in the other, and if per adventure, as might happen, another came into either life, another who meant infinitely more, they would be game losers. There was to be no mistake this time. Life was too short to permit of another blunder. The memory of the first was too vivid at times with each of them.

"Blast it!" fumed Robert Smith impatiently, as the train whistled for the little station, and

his lady love, charmingly petite held out her hand in farewell. "This is what I call a piece of d—d nonsense."

She leaned most tantalizingly near, her eyes mischievous and challenging. "You agreed Robert—in any case you will be glad—that is so, is it not? If I meet someone I like better, you will have escaped and if not—" she laughed. "We will not discuss that will we? and vice versa Robert. We have nothing to fear in either case. Don't scowl; cheer up; in one instance I might lose you—but then I could not be happy with you if you loved another, besides it will be an interesting experiment." She was so near, her eyes laughing into his, her cheeks flushed, and lips tempting him.

"Alice, for two cents I'd hold you tight."

"Hush, you may soon regret all your idle words to me when you meet her. Here, play the game; be a sport; two months isn't a whole lifetime. Shake hands. Say, 'Fare thee well till we meet again' and smile, Robert, for any sake, smile."

And just then Robert Smith held out his hand and smiled. He would play the game. The change was so sudden that her face paled as he stood by her side ready to alight. "Fare thee well, Alice. Fear not; I will play the game to

the finish—whatever that finish be, bitter or sweet. In any case, as you say, it will be well. The curtain is up; the first act has begun. Good-bye, good luck to you and to me—till we meet again."

After that, he left her, not even assisting her into the waiting motor. She turned around in the glimmering light and noticed him seated beside a pretty girl with a much besflowered hat. Then before she had time to observe further, the horn tooted and the cars started on their way down the valley to Les Quatre Vents, and Robert and the flowered hat became only a bit of the darkness ahead.

As his car was first to arrive at the hotel he was nowhere to be seen when she entered the rotunda.

She registered her maiden name, "Miss Alice Bell," according to her decision to play the game unhampered by a widow's past. She wrote it easily and quickly, but on looking up perceived the clerk to be staring at her rather boldly. A guilty flush covered her cheeks—did he know? Somehow the situation was not so amusing as she had anticipated. When she had held the trump card, the game bristled with life, but now since it had passed into Robert's hands, the interest suddenly fagged. But the next moment her

eyes flashed and her head went high "She was no quitter; he would see that she could play the game too to either finish, bitter or sweet. "Good-bye," her thoughts echoed. "Good luck to you and to me—till we meet again."

"Your room, madam. No. 221 second floor" the clerk announced for the third time. She turned quickly and followed while a spot of red burned on either cheek.

There was also a morning express, a local which stopped at the station of Pine Hill and was met by the motors from Les Quatre Vents. Shortly after 10 a.m. the guests arrived and the rotunda of the hotel was again the scene of bustle and hurry.

Among the first at the desk stood a short dark man, his panama pulled well over his forehead and his waxed moustache tapering to a fine point at either end. He walked up in a pompous fashion, apparently a man of leisure and means, but underneath the panama brim his dark eyes were alert and watchful, his glance keenly perceptive of every detail.

Before registering he quickly scanned the page above, before, and in a flash his right eye winked and his right thumb clicked. In a flourishing hand he signed, "T. T. Timmins, Boston." Then, stepping quickly aside, half

hidden behind a huge pillar to the right of the entrance, drew a small red note book from the inside pocket of his vest and hastily jotted something within it.

"Room 200, second floor," the clerk's voice sounded in a monotonous twang, as T. T. Timmins snapped the note book closed, and placing it carefully back in the left hand inner pocket of his vest, followed his baggage. Crossing his path, but unseen by him, and timidly approaching the desk was a young girl in a blue suit bravely struggling to retain her equilibrium under the excessive strain of a heavy suitcase. She laid it down wearily, as a brass buttoned boy quickly took his place beside her.

"Thank you. Just a moment, I may not stay here," blushing she turned to the clerk. "What are the rates by the week?"

On hearing his reply, she blushed deeper, "I'm afraid I can't afford it. Is there any other place near?" her eyes began to get watery.

The clerk noticing her blushes, grinned; then, leaning nearer, grinned again and lowering his voice almost to a whisper said, "Yes, down in the valley, on the shore—my mother keeps it—Rainbow House; t'will suit you O.K. Pay the driver half a dollar and he'll take you there bag and baggage. So long; see you later; good luck."

She stiffened her chin. The information was what she desired, but the manner of it audacious. Turning on her heel with a sharp "thanks," she picked up her heavy suitcase and disappeared through the door. "A pretty girl, with dark fluffy hair, blue eyes, slight, medium height, plainly dressed in a blue suit."

But Thomas Timothy Timmins, plain clothes private detective, now a guest at Les Quatres Vents playing the gentleman, but really in search of the governess suspected of stealing Mrs. Josiah Grimes' pearl necklace, stood in front of the mirror in his room number 200, second floor, overlooking right corridor, with blinds drawn, and after leisurely laying his panama on the table by his side, winked his right eye, and clicked his right thumb, then quickly lifted a red note book from his left hand vest pocket, and stared with eyes gleaming and cheeks glowing at the last item jotted there. "She's here," he gloated to himself. "Two of them, no less. Is it a mere coincidence or a plot to confuse me? More than likely, the latter. She will undoubtedly be disguised as a widow; that's been the reason for her delay in reaching here. Stayed in town a couple of days getting ready—the sly sis. If she has an accomplice, it will be the friend who loaned her the clothes. I'll watch for you,

my pretties; already my usual good luck follows me."

Thomas Timothy Timmins greeted his reflection as he looked up from the note book, with a self satisfied grin. He gently fingered the tapering points of his finely waxed moustache with real affection, and gave his vest a gentle tug down in the front. Then, throwing the advanced portion of his anatomy a little further into the light and swinging his abbreviated neck upwards, w' h a slight flourish of his right arm he dropped the red note book back into the left hand pocket in the lining of his vest, then raising the blind, and switching off the light, stepped jauntily into the corridor.

A little later on, in check suit, red tie, and black silk-peaked cap, tilted characteristically over the right eye, he feigned an inclination to drowsiness, and lounged near the main entrance, his blinking orbs keenly alive to the going and coming of the guests. While his scrutiny missed none, his active brain summed up the Grimes evidence to date, in this manner: "The two signatures mean trick, the real Alice Bell and her friend, who's a novice at the game—her work shows it—you can't fool T. T. T. He's no last night's chicken, the grass don't grow under his feet neither. I'm on to you, my pretties. I'm

on to you and no mistake. Dressed as a widow—she'll be sure to show herself soon—I'll have my eye on her in two cracks; see if I don't." He felt jovial and continued this self flattery until it was brought to an end by someone slapping him smartly on the back. He turned quickly.

"Hello there, Timmins," a hearty voice greeted him. "Taking the show in? Couldn't mistake you in a crowd."

"You got me," said Winkler. "Face familiar, and all that—but I'm wandering."

"Had your breakfast?"

Nod from Winkler.

"Then you have time for a chat?" the man questioned pleasantly, seating himself.

"Sure—but take me out of the woods."

"Remember the famous Hinton case, Timmins?"

"You jolly well bet I do," replied Winkler interested at once, "don't imagine any of us will ever forget it either."

"How many years ago is it?" The stranger eyed Winkler closely.

"Fifteen—if it's a day—I recollect we ran him down late one night in August in an old shack at the end of Canal Street. Say, man, you're not Smith of the 'Sun' are you?" Winkler's face beamed.

"That's a winner," Robert Smith laughed. "I'm the same Smith—though I left the 'Sun' long ago."

Then they shook hands so heartily, that for a moment the detective forgot to be vigilant.

"Often wondered where you had strayed to—was down on the Hamilton case soon after but never stumbled across you again."

"You had a great reputation those days for running them in. Kept the record up, I suppose?" Robert Smith enjoyed this chance encounter and intended making the most of it.

"You can just bet your boots, I've kept the record up." Winkler began to let off steam—always a pleasant occupation with him. "There's not another, before or since, come within a mile of me. I keep them guessing—take it from me." He slapped his knee and laughed boisterously. "I always get what I go after; put your money on me every time, Smith. You know the Ching Chang case; I got that yellow devil in three days—they realize what's ahead of them when they see me coming. Remember reading about Sam Kruss getting off with a quarter million of the Shiller-Watson Companies gold and bonds? He got away did he? Five thousand for his capture. I was out for that reward—and when T. T. T. goes out for anything—money, jewels,

bonds, reward, or a chicken thief—he gets it. I got that five thousand all right."

"How did you manage it?" asked Smith crossing his legs and lighting a fresh cigar.

"Now, there's something funny about a crook." Winkler grew philosophical. "It beats me why he does it; but they most all follow the same road—something in their craniums that thinks wrong when they should think right. But murder will out you know, and they all make a slip somewhere."

"With a few exceptions," remarked Smith. "I have in mind 'Tim the Tickler.' He fooled you all; you never got him. Ever hear anything from him now?"

"That guy was the real stuff and no mistake," conceded the detective thoughtfully. "He kept us all guessing. No, sir; we never got him, and for about five years haven't heard anything from him—reformed—and holding revivals somewhere maybe. As far as I know no one ever got a squint at him sideways—wouldn't know him from a chink—guess he's safe enough holding his prayer meeting."

"They never set you on him. Did they, Winkler?" grinned Smith.

"Don't pull any of that stuff over on me Smith," Winkler retorted, eyeing his friend

critically. "I'm sore about it yet; I'd have given my eye teeth for him."

"By the way," remarked Smith, knocking the ash from his cigar, "about Sam Kruss—how did you get him?"

"I nearly lost my job over that," said Winkler, pushing Tim the Tickler aside for the moment. "Lynn and I most came to blows over that; I said he'd make his getaway close to home—it's a trick they have—and Lynn opposed me. The crook thinks we'll chase him miles away while all the time he's hiding in a box in the cellar or under a plank in the kitchen floor. Well, I was right," ended Winkler, suddenly becoming non-committal.

"Go on. I'm listening," remarked Smith.

"So long," said Winkler rising, and without further comment turned on his heel, and disappeared down the corridor.

Robert Smith smiled, threw away his cigar stump, sat thoughtful a moment, then got up and went out.

The trouble with the Sam Kruss case was, that while Winkler looked under the plank in the kitchen floor the thief came out of a crack in the wall, felled the detective to the ground, and jumped from the window, only to be seized by two of Winkler's associates who, unknown to

him, had followed and waited. The whole experience proved to be so humiliating that though aiming the reward, he never rehearsed the act, or enjoyed that five thousand.

After lunch Winkler was again seated near the main entrance of the hotel apparently asleep, his peaked cap pulled well over his right eye, and as Robert Smith in passing scrutinized him closely he remained motionless, obviously still unconscious of his surroundings. "Queer fellow that," grinned Smith to himself. "I wonder what he's after here."

As he disappeared out the side door, Winkler quietly tugged his cap a little further over his right eye, thrust his hands deep into his trouser pockets, and resumed his former appearance of blissful irresponsibility. "The widow had not appeared in the dining room for lunch, probably her meals were served in her room," he contemplated, when suddenly down the corridor facing him, walked the "widow" timidly, furtively advancing, suspicious of all eyes. What if her husband should be one of those seated there? Taking courage from the fact that he was not, she hurried across to the office, and the detective moved carelessly to a chair nearer. "Is there any mail for Mrs. Forester?" she asked in a low, nervous voice. "Yes, a letter," said the clerk.

"I'll take it—it's mine—" she held out her hand for it, her face flaming and her glance avoiding his.

He looked at her suspiciously as she turned away, and hastily half stumbling walked across the floor to the elevator.

Then, as she disappeared, he pulled over the register book turning the pages back, while with his first finger he ran quickly over the list of names. "As I thought," he muttered "No Mrs. Forester here; and what right has Mrs. Alice Bell to Mrs. Forester's letters—I'll see about this." The detective was now wide awake, no more feigning unconsciousness. He stood up and stretched lazily, all the time keeping his eye on the clerk and grinning broadly; then in a very casual way, sauntered over to the desk. "Pretty little widow that," he commented pleasantly.

"Know nothing about her," stated the clerk whose name was Harry K. Lawrence, as he turned his back on the man.

"Well, I do," Winkler flung out, frowning slightly.

Harry paid no heed, and the detective started to walk away.

Curiosity then asserted itself. "What's the matter with her?" the clerk questioned sharply.

Winkler turned and smiled, then drew up

close to the desk, and leaned over, "Her name's Mrs. Alice Bell?"

A nod from Harry.

"Well—keep your eye on her, young man. She's worth watching." His voice was low and confidential, and as he sauntered off he turned and grinned reassuringly.

"Who in the dickens is he?" Harry, the clerk, asked himself as the check suit and peaked cap, disappeared from sight. "He's some spite against her I'll bet a tin whistle. Mighty queer all round. She looked scared blue, though I'll be hanged if I know what she would want with a letter that didn't belong to her. Forester? Huh —just a moment," as he turned again the leaves of the register. "Here it is—Guy Forester, Philadelphia—well, I'm blowed if I can make A or Z of it."

CHAPTER VIII.

Robert Smith had been out walking, and after following the little trail leading down through the forest of white pine to the beach below, he explored the length and breadth of it, and on returning met "her," his lady love, with the "other man." They nodded and passed on, she with cheeks flushed and eyes bright, chatting gaily to her new friend, and he experiencing an antagonism impossible of explanation.

Deeming it wise not to encourage this attitude of mind, he attempted to brush the thing from him as though it were a spider web, and on nearing the hotel assumed a "don't care grin" and seated himself near the promenade philosophically watching the guests, and displaying an interest in them, which he did not feel. But he could not so easily control his thoughts and they continued to revert to the incident he tried most to forget. He upbraided himself. "His bow had been stiff, that was certain. Could she imagine him annoyed?" Not for the world would he have her so interpret him. He would play the game; she would at least have to admire him for that. He could lose—grinning. It

sounded heroic, like playing to the galleries, but he knew what it meant.

He got up and walked over to the other side of the hotel, and was making his way between the shrubs to a seat hidden by a lilac bush when he met them again, face to face. They were sauntering slowly and talking earnestly. She turned brightly on seeing him, and nodded. It was a surprise encounter; he was not prepared for it. Raising his hat quickly, he hurried on confused, and conscious that he had shown it. After a moment he turned to look back,—she stood on the lower step of the side entrance twirling with a green silk parasol, her interest apparently centered on the man before her. What Robert Smith muttered under his breath, the winds carried over the tops of the white pine trees and blew out to sea. He entered the hotel by the main entrance, passing Winkler who jauntily paraded the left corridor, without seeing him, and hurried up the stairs to his room, where he flung himself into the big chintz covered rocker by the window, picked up a magazine he had read three times already, and to all appearances became engrossed in an article on "air travel" which he knew almost word for word. Finding that feigning with himself could not be indulged in for long, he suddenly threw

the magazine to the floor with a bang and laying his head back, closed his eyes.

After a moment he took from his vest pocket a pencil and small pocket pad, scribbled something on it, tore it up, hurled it into the waste paper basket and repeated this operation several times.

Finally seizing a telegram blank which lay on the table, he wrote on it, folded it in four, and after glancing in the mirror to fit his panama on, carefully left the room.

After walking down the left corridor and along the front hall, he turned to the right and halted before room 221, then waiting a moment to make sure that he was alone in the hall bent down swiftly and slipped the little yellow note underneath his lady love's door, then hastily retracing his way back to his room he closed the door quietly behind him. Robert Smith's, widow lady love, Alice Bell Wright, now Miss Alice Bell, had found the hours pass quickly enough since the chance meeting with her old friend Guy Forester, the second morning after her arrival. Her people had known his people in the years before, when the children of both families attended high school together, and later she had met Guy before his marriage, when success had hoisted him high on a pedestal of his

own, and the promised land looked near. Her husband Harold Wright was a close friend of Guy's, and between the three there had grown up an intimacy which had only been broken when Wright and his bride moved west, and Guy Forester remained east to build up the business that was soon to be reckoned as the greatest manufacturing concern in the country. After her husband's death ten years before she had come east again and the chance meeting at Les Quatre Vents was a glad surprise to each.

That afternoon they had parted at the side entrance, and all engrossed with her own thoughts, which were naturally of a reminiscent character she went slowly up the stairs, passing near her room, 221, but without heeding him, a stoutish man with dark eyes and waxed moustache, dressed in a checked suit and red tie, who, on her approach hastily slipped something he had been reading into his coat pocket and quickly moved on.

Winkler had been sauntering along the hall "treading on air," feeling that the noose of the law was already tightening in the light of that morning's incident, when out in front of him blown by a sudden gust of wind, flew a little four-cornered yellow note. On picking it up he read:

Dear Alice,—I am glad for your sake that this has happened, accept my sincere congratulations.

R.

He knew that the widow he was after, Mrs. Alice Bell, occupied the suite No. 230, for he had watched her door, openly, and secretly, through his key hole, which was the end key hole, overlooking the corridor.

"I'm blasted," he muttered. "Who's R—, and what's he glad about? I say T. T. T.," addressing himself, "this means vigilance. It means there's a man in the game who's glad she got off with that pearl necklace and who wants to get on the good side of her. Perhaps he has followed her here; anyhow, I'll watch for you young man—never fear."

Then glancing carefully about, he shoved the note under the door of room 230 and quickly disappeared down the hall.

The occupant of room 230 was seated in her chintz covered rocker by the window, when steps halted at her door. She turned expectantly, then fear seized her and she felt herself grow pale.

The secrecy of the past week at *Les Quatre Vents* was unnerving her. From every corner eyes pried upon her; steps from behind caused

her to hasten, not daring to glance around. Each day she had grown to hate herself more, and the thing she was doing. From her window overlooking the promenade, she watched her husband and the flirt who had stolen him from her—the clever business woman whom he had no doubt secretly admired for years, even when making love to her. She utterly despised him, and for the woman felt only contempt and hate. Her mind was sour; her mental deductions on life in general, and particular, any phase of it that presented itself to her came under cynical censure. If her repugnance vented itself upon any one thing more than another, it was her own conduct. Her argument always rebounding back to the cause, her husband's crime, and in turn to the contemptible seduction of the seducer.

She had watched them that afternoon as they stood on the steps of the side entrance, and courage failed her. She was as yet too conscious of her disguise and its significance to rush down and accuse him. A certain pride was hers inherently, and she could not get away from it. Her position humiliated her. She felt guilty and imagined all eyes upon her, consequently she remained in her room and resolved to appear as little as possible before the guests of the hotel. When her courage came again, that high cour-

age with which she had started out, matters would reach a climax. All the Williams' bravado and independence of purpose, with its attending determination was gone—she knew it would come again—for the power of it was hers yet. Only such a situation could have so weakened her, or was this strength she boasted, power or bluff?

It had been power with her father, that bullying and dictation countenancing no interference; that dominant characteristic carving out the inflexible path ahead; that inheritance of which she was proud—was it so much worth while after all?

She felt that she needed a prod in the back, for she was like some captain flunking at sight of the enemy. For the first time in her life she saw beneath the false glimmer that had covered the Williams' history for years. Everything underneath that glimmer was not good to look upon. The blemishes held her eye, and the longer she studied them the uglier they became. With this enlightenment came as yet no denunciation, for her loyalty was such that the condemnation of those she loved did not present a duty to her.

As she turned expectantly to the door a little yellow slip of paper was silently shoved under it into her room. The footsteps receded almost stealthily and she sat staring and afraid.

In a moment the puzzle simplified—the note was meant for another room—the number had been mistaken. No one could possibly have any reason for slipping a note under her door. She even smiled to herself as she went over to it.

If she had not been so foolishly fearful the mistake could have been made known to the sender, and the note delivered to the right person; as it was the situation might become embarrassing.

It bore no address and she opened it hesitatingly.

"Dear Alice," her heart pounded—who could have seen through her disguise? Hot flaming shame burned her cheeks. "I am glad for your sake that this has happened. Accept my sincere congratulations. R."

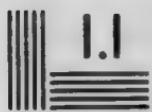
Someone was there who knew of her husband's conduct, the disgrace that had fallen upon her and imagined she would be glad of her freedom. "Congratulations." The humiliation of it. Who was "R"? She could think of no one. Someone had rated her low indeed. Had the suite instead of a single room, her widow's veil, the extreme nervousness and self consciousness of every act, her hurrying, stumbling confusion stamped her as something cheap?

She had surely left herself open to misinter-



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pretation. The thought was horrible. The message was an insult and as such had been aimed at her by an unknown hand. She remembered a bold looking man in check suit and red tie, staring her most insolently on that unfortunate morning when the expected letter from her mother had necessitated an enquiry for it. Since then she had written other arrangements and not again would she be liable to detection from that source.

After reading the yellow message many times, and becoming more and more bewildered and confused, her mind refused to cope with the puzzle longer, and she gave way to helpless rage.

When that passed, and as the night wore on, she cried herself to sleep, smothering her sobs in the soft, downy pillow, lest the shadows creep out of their corners to accuse her.

CHAPTER IX.

Thomas Timothy Timmins, nicknamed Winkler, private detective of the celebrated Haynes Agency, Boston, now engaged in tracing Mrs. Josiah Grimes' pearl necklace, stretched his legs lazily over one of the rustic benches to the side of the north promenade, and with his head reclining in a backward position, his black peaked cap pulled well over his right eye, he kept the shaded orb as well as his squinting left focused upon a second floor window, which looked innocent enough until on second sight, was observed at short intervals a restless pushing aside of the curtains, followed by the appearance of a pale, anxious face, scanning the forms of the passers by below. The object evidently being to observe without herself attracting notice.

In the Grimes case, the law had pointed its circumstantial evidence finger to one Alice Bell, late governess of the said Mrs. Grimes, and Winkler felt confident that he was on her track. Nothing could shake his conviction that he had the woman "Alice Bell" under his thumb. She was disguised as a widow and had changed her Miss to Mrs.—a simple trick—but not too sim-

ple to go unnoticed by one who understood the criminal mind from A to Z. Her actions all pointed to the fact that she was living under a strain. He had watched her on every occasion when she emerged from the secrecy of her own room—a seldom occurrence, to be sure but all the more incriminating for that—while her unnatural manner and excessive nervousness denoted guilt. There was not a doubt left in Winkler's mind that she was the thief, and had the "goods on her."

As he lounged on the rustic bench, assuming as natural and unconcerned a bearing as possible, while keeping his eyes assiduously fixed upon the window above, he called himself a fool for not seizing his "prey" while she wiled away the precious hours that might have taken her far from the scene of crime, and given him a chase at any rate.

As it was the case provided nothing in the way of excitement. Little remained but to affect an arrest at any time, the sooner the better. When pressed she would "squeal"—they all did. Strange that ill directed cunning of the criminal which kept him in hiding near home. "The easiest case for years—like sailing down stream with the wind," he inwardly commented.

A few days previous he had put into action a

particularly brilliant idea which necessitated a brief delay. It was a test, and undoubtedly would hasten things to a climax. If it worked as he expected, his victim would show her hand and he could already see "the bracelets of the law" encircling her slender wrists.

Continuing this accostomed recreation of administering self praise, he was surprised into a sudden exclamation, when a heavy whack on the shoulder brought him face to face with Robert Smith smiling behind him.

"Caught napping this time, Winkler," Smith chuckled. "That little thief you're after could have tickled your nose for all you'd know."

"Leave it to me," the detective bragged, slightly ruffled at this interruption, "thief I'm after, eh! You're sure some wise guy Smith; who's your 'know it all?'"

"Sharp is the word for me," his friend laughed again, "I smelt the cheese away off. Here—" thrusting the morning paper before him, and directing his attention to a certain article on the front page, "is my clue."

Winkler read the article through without a change of expression; in fact so perfect was his facial control that for a moment Robert Smith doubted his own shrewdness; the next, however, he concluded that Winkler's noncommittal coun-

tenance argued for, instead of against his deductions.

"Old news to me," was the surprising comment, "that sort of thing still interesting to you Smith?"

"Yes, and always will be," answered Smith, seating himself beside Winkler and watching the revolutions of his silver-headed cane as he struck it into the sand and twirled it around. "Have you got your thumb on her yet, Winkler?"

The detective turned and grinned. "So you think I'm on that job—think again, Smith."

"Since reading it, I've been watching the guests," Smith threw back, "in order to spot her; I've also been keeping my eye on the dark corners, and tripping up the edges of the rugs for some trace of those jewels. Wouldn't mind running you a race, Winkler—often thought of joining that famous agency myself."

"Nothing doing," said Winkler, twisting his waxed moustache with energy and eyeing Smith.

"Well, good luck T. T. T., and if I spot her first I'll throw a noose round her neck and haul her along to you—or better still," here Smith laughed jovially, "report to headquarters, and claim the reward myself."

He stood up, twirled his cane, and eyed Winkler good naturedly.

"How would you like a finger in the pie, Smith?"

Smith laughed, "I'm not here seeking notoriety, but if I joined your class I'd flunk at hounding women; I'd quit there."

"Much obliged," the detective shot at him. Smith turned the other way chuckling to himself, then obeying a sudden impulse faced Winkler again.

"I knew you were here after some poor devil," he explained pleasantly, "and having nothing to do, my curiosity demanded to be satisfied. I easily scented a rat, on reading the account of Mrs. Grimes' stolen necklace, and the information that the case had been placed in the hands of the Haynes Agency furnished me with the desired clue to your mission here. You know of old, Winkler, how that sort of thing attracts me."

Now the detective in turn became communicative, "By Jove!" he ejaculated, slapping his right knee, "you were a thoroughbred on the scent and I'm blamed if I haven't an idea to get you in on this. I had that article put in to scare her, let her know we're after her, make her tremble—see?"

"Reel it off, and if it's interesting enough there is a chance," Smith offered seating himself again beside Winkler, and grinning expectantly.

The detective in a low voice exposed the in-

tent of the criminal in stealing Mrs. Grimes' jewels, the details of the case he knew, and many he imagined. The worth of the necklace, the card of address found after the governess had flown supplying the clue they had successfully worked upon. His immediate spotting of the criminal, her disguise, the fear and anxiety written upon her countenance; accidentally omitting the incident of the note, and coloring the whole narrative as only Winkler could, philosophizing and supplementing as he proceeded according to his custom, and strangely holding Smith's interest throughout.

As Winkler harped upon the criminal's name "Alice Bell," Smith felt himself shiver; at the same time, this strange coincidence of synonymous names hastened his determination to a definite course of action.

"And what use can you put me to?" he asked.
"It was just one of those brilliant ideas that come so suddenly to me," further explained Winkler, "getting you into it. By Jove!" again slapping his knee, "that's where I pull their ears every time; I tell you, Smith, it's not enough for a man to have brains and use them. He must be brilliant. You see, if I could catch her at it. You know what I mean—meet her, talk to her, use her own words as evidence against her—

that's the way I like to get them; something high class about it you know. I like to see them choking themselves—tying their own ropes, so to speak. You're the man I want, Smith—the real thing. Get to know her; make friends with her; get her talking; confuse her—you can do it if you will."

"If I had anything else to do, I'd laugh at you," said Robert Smith. "But I'm dead sick of idling. It will at least contribute some amusement. So—we'll call it a go. However, Winkler, I'm to be free to work or play just as I will. In helping you out on this case, I do as I please—see? I'm butting in just for fun—entertainment if you will—so forget it when it's over; I don't ever want to hear about it again—understand?"

Winkler nodded and winked, "I'm wise," he agreed, "so put on your kid gloves and wind up your wits and go to it. I'm the one to appreciate it, Smith, if you'll help me to go back into Port again with all sails spread."

The problem that now confronted Robert Smith was one of approach. How should be approach this Alice Bell—thief—who had stolen Mrs. Josiah Grimes' pearl necklace and was now apparently idly vacationing at Les Quatre Vents, but who in reality only awaited a favour-

able get away? It seemed an unfair advantage to take of her—this working his way into her confidence only to use that confidence as a weapon against her. He promptly removed that stumbling block by pledging himself to do nothing of the kind. On the contrary he might be able to help her, if for instance, the offence was her first she might be brought to see the advantage of returning the jewels and avoiding the consequent notoriety. If the law took its course, then—and this was his strong point—his "Alice" must be protected at any cost. If in any way the real thief eluded the "hounds of the law" his "Alice," because of the synonymous names, might fall under suspicion, and an embarrassing situation result.

Robert Smith quickly came to the conclusion that with his help matters might be brought to a hasty climax, and that ere long Les Quatre Vents would be free of both the presence, of Thomas Timothy Timmins, private detective, and Alice Bell, the "woman in the case." Above all he determined that in no way must his Alice be affected by the unfortunate incident and in order to assure her safety, it was necessary that he should "lend a hand to the law."

It was obvious also that in order to be of any real service he must become blind to the means

employed, remembering only the general and personal good resultant, in short believing in this case that "the end justified the means."

With this argument uppermost, a course of action was not so difficult to determine, especially as he found himself entering eagerly into the chase, for the sake of the chase itself.

What means would he employ in order to gain the lady's acquaintance? As Winkler said, the case called for kid gloves. Already the anticipation put zest into his otherwise idle existence and drove into the back ground those vexing thoughts that had continually asserted themselves since his better judgment had been thwarted by a foolish impulse. That wretched yellow message, written and delivered, in a moment of unexplainable emotion, had been the cause of an increasing bad humour, and there were hours when he could have pitched up the whole miserable contract with his widow lady love and cried "quits." Much against his will had he been drawn into the thing. The idea was to his way of thinking such a fool one, that no decent man in his right senses could be expected to lend an ear to it. Yet, he had consented, and much might lie in the result. It was up to him to play the game to the finish.

With these thoughts tumbling through his

brain, Robert Smith sauntered along the north promenade and confessed himself as yet at sea in regard to a course of procedure. He had learned from Winkler that the woman spent much of her time in the security of her own room, which fact complicated matters considerably. There was no immediate haste except that the sooner she and the detective, pursuer and pursued, took themselves off from *Les Quatre Vents*, the sooner would all fear of embarrassing situations be removed.

While in deep thought and somewhat oblivious to the beauty of nature, and careless of direction, he turned from the beaten path and crossed over between the shrubs to a rustic seat, commanding an excellent view of the valley below, at the same time hidden from the curious gaze of the passer by. He stuck his cane in the ground and sat down, his mind still preoccupied and contemplative. Instead of viewing the slopes beneath, he turned and abstractedly studied the shrubs which formed a green bank between him and the popular promenade.

Suddenly his eye was attracted to a blotch of black, jutting out from beneath the green at his feet.

He carelessly poked it with his cane out of sight, then curiously bent down and sought for

it. On detecting it he discovered it to be a black silk chatelaine bag, and dropped it on the seat beside him.

Before going up to his room he handed it in at the office, as the one who had lost it would no doubt inquire for it there.

"Something I found," he said, "beside a shrub, a bit off from the promenade—probably the loser will inquire here."

Just then the phone rang. "Yes," the clerk, Harry Lawrence, answered, "Mrs. Bell, did you say? room 221. What was it like? Black-corded silk bag, silver clasp. That's right; will send it right up."

Robert Smith, listening, suddenly realized that fate had thrown open a door for him. "I'll drop it in; I'm passing," he volunteered. "No bother at all," in response to a remark from the clerk.

The method of approach was solved—he had only to make good use of the opportunity. He had thought of her as "the thief" and had conceived no mental picture of her. She was a woman, in widow's black, and a thief—that was all.

Winkler had not described her appearance, and up to now his curiosity had not even attempted a possible surmise. Even as he knocked

at the door his interest was not in her, personally.

The finding of her chatelaine bag was welcome news to Lillian Forester, for the losing of it might have proved more than embarrassing. Expecting the bell boy, she opened the door gladly, almost impulsively.

"Mrs. Bell?" Robert Smith enquired. "I took the liberty of delivering your bag in person as I happen to have a room on the same corridor."

This fashionable woman so expensively gown-ed, could she be a thief? But the fear that filled those childlike blue eyes at his appearance, and the flush that dyed her cheeks, were they not the evidence of guilt? The clothes were borrowed; she w... disguised—that was enough. Even governesses sometimes have rich friends. The suite was likely paid for out of the same pocket. All the apparent contradictions were easily account-ed for when the matter was considered thought-fully. In a moment his confidence returned.

She took the bag, thanking him for it.

The cause justified the advance. He grew bold, "I trust, Mrs. Bell, that nothing is miss-ing."

She opened it hurriedly, her fear returning. Where was the case with her visiting cards? It was gone. What if Guy should discover it?

That had been her dread and it now became an actual fear with her.

He noted the change in her expression with suspicion.

"My card case," she stammered hesitatingly, in doubt as to the wisdom of confiding in this stranger.

"Is it gone?" he smiled.

"Yes, and I must find it." Her embarrassment was all too evident.

"Probably the card of her benevolent friend," he surmised. "Quite a telltale find, to be sure." This was his opening.

"Can I be of further assistance?" His voice was solicitous. "It would give me great pleasure to help you." Had he gone too far?

Fear was still ruling her. "No. No thank you—please do not bother."

If he found it, how could she explain? Such a situation must be avoided. "Please—I do not wish it—don't look for it. The wind has probably carried it away, everything else is here, and it was nothing anyway—just a card case," she even attempted a smile.

He understood the subterfuge and mentally made a resolution.

"Yes," he replied returning the smile, "It is fortunate that it was only a card case. I'll be

pleased to be of assistance to you at any time." He withdrew, eyeing her confusion without pity, and smiling into her fearful eyes with the confidence of superior strategy. He surmised that she wished to locate the card case unassisted, which would allow him to become further acquainted with her.

From a purely logical standpoint his first advance had been successful; her guilt was obvious, and judging from his knowledge of human nature she would not hold out long.

As he considered it quietly in his own room, he had to acknowledge a slight pity for her. She was young and pretty and her eyes the purest blue he had ever seen. Her hands were beautifully-shaped and cared for, in fact she bore every appearance of being a gentlewoman. However, his admiration for her failed to alter his conviction in regard to her. He but smiled cynically and philosophized.

Meeting Winkler in the corridor later on during the day, he shook his head in response to an invitation to "hob nob." "Nothing doing," was the impression he wished to convey.

His next move permitted of no third party.

On the beach he came face to face with his beloved Alice, and her "new friend." The man acted like an old acquaintance. In meeting she

smiled almost affectionately, and slightly hesitated, as though wishing to speak, but on second thought turned hurriedly away. Robert Smith could not overcome the feeling of resentment which stirred him at sight of her, with this stranger. Of course, he knew she had a perfect right to—and the man was no doubt a decent chap and all that sort of thing—but the fact that she had wasted so little time in discovering her “affinity,” stung him. “Perhaps,” he argued, and his heart caught at this, “her intention was to tantalize him.” There had always been a willful streak in her, which, while finding attractive enough, he could not understand.

She had never replied to his “yellow message,” and he became filled with confusion as he thought of it. The tiny spark of jealousy he had fanned into life that day on the beach a week ago, when he had first met her with the stranger, now made him feel, in thinking of it, like an awkward school boy caught with the “goods on him.” In order to avoid any conversation with Winkler he walked two miles up the beach to Eagle’s Point and did not return till late.

After dinner, avoiding the rotunda, he returned to his room to read until dark, when another matter would engage his attention.

At precisely 9:30 he sauntered out onto the

north promenade. The night was dark, the moon in its last quarter, and only a few stars lit up the sky. Here and there a dim light shone between the trees, just enough to relieve the total blackness.

As Robert Smith walked along slowly, idly glancing from side to side, curiously noting the individuals requiring further privacy than the public walk afforded, he passed rather frequently a certain spot beside a rustic seat, almost hidden by a bank of shrubs from prying eyes, and which in daylight commanded an excellent view of the valley beyond.

A dark figure near the seat attracted his attention. He swung quickly into the shade, idly twirling his cane as he drew near. Someone was crouched low excitedly fumbling among the green at the base of the shrubs. On his approach, she stood up and turned away. A widow's veil hung from her small black hat, and a black cloak was flung over her shoulders.

"Ah, Mrs. Bell," he surprised her, "permit me—you are in trouble, I see."

She faced him, fear for the moment gone. The card case was not there, and she concluded that it must have either been blown by the wind or picked up by some passer by. With the disappointment of failing to discover it had come a

certain recklessness. She kept asking herself, "Why should my husband be happy while I am miserable?"

That afternoon she had seen him with the "woman" again. They had sauntered idly, as though time counted not, and had spent more than an hour in a quiet corner of the grounds, conversing earnestly. She experienced a feeling of disgust with life, and an utter disregard for convention—which at the best, she argued, was only an outer garment people threw on and off at pleasure, and hid under again to save their reputations, besides, too, she was suffering from an accute attack of loneliness. Never before in her life had she been so much alone. The solitude of her own room became a nightmare to her. Each night she lay in dread of the silence of the coming day. The passion of revenge had died. She waited expecting it to kindle again, but it did not. She seemed incapable of high feeling; weariness overcame her and every little while she felt sorry, sorry for everything, and always lonely.

As Robert Smith pleasantly offered his assistance, his voice broke that awful stillness that had been pressing hard upon her, and welcoming it as a merciful deliverance she spoke freely.

"Thank you. I am not really in trouble. I

have only been searching for my card case and have not found it."

"I will have a look for it in the daylight," he ventured offhand.

"Please do not trouble further," she attempted to dismiss the subject. "You have been most kind, and I feel that I failed in courtesy to you to-day. I have been somewhat worried lately and hardly recognize my own actions."

This certainly was encouraging.

"Would you care to be seated, Mrs. Bell?" His advance, now that the fence was down, was rapid.

Hesitating only for a moment, she assented, while drawing her cloak more closely about her. "You have the advantage," she remarked.

"Yes, pardon me, and it is an unfair one. My name is Smith—Robert Smith—and my home is in New York. I am here for a holiday and find it darn dreary at times. There are magazines in my room which I could repeat from start to finish, you perhaps know what that means."

She laughed, the first for weeks, "Indeed I do, and think probably I could tell a similar story."

"I hope they aren't the same magazines," he retorted.

They both laughed at this, and she felt much of her embarrassment gone.

"However," he went on, "we don't come here to shut ourselves in our rooms. I am out much of the time as I presume you are."

She did not reply.

"This afternoon I walked along the beach to Eagle's Point. Have you been there?"

"No," she replied timidly.

He went on, "The view from the rocks is wonderful, yet not quite so fine as from the tower in the gable. What do you think of it?"

"I have not been up."

"Ah," he said and grinned to himself, "you have a treat in store. But no doubt you swim. I managed to get past the rock to-day and landed on a little strip of beach up the inlet; you probably prefer to keep to the bay."

"I have not been to the beach," she spoke without thinking, then became embarrassed. What idea would he have of her—to be at Les Quatre Vents a week and not yet to the beach?"

He appeared to be unimpressed.

"You do not care for sea bathing, I judge," was his careless comment. "I have a sister like that; but the air is the thing—great isn't it?" Then in a moment, "This is your favourite seat; you bring your work here often? It is so hidden I should not have discovered it."

She was trembling; surely he could not ques-

tion her without intent, but for what purpose? Or was it only her suspicion? Her nerves were unstrung; she must go before her condition become evident. Probably he was only pleasant and kind, but she was too nervous to converse intelligently with anyone. "I must go," she stammered pitifully, "I am here for a rest and keep mostly to my own room."

"Later on," he commented, "you will go out more; your stay will not be a short one."

"It is so indefinite that I may leave any day. The change is not helping me as it should," she explained nervously.

He winked, knowingly. She was a poor actor, probably her first offence. He wondered where she had the jewels hidden.

"Let me accompany you," he offered as they crossed the lawn to the side entrance.

Then he turned abruptly, startled and confused. Mounting the steps beside them was his lady love and her new friend. She leaned forward and smiled, while to his utter amazement Mrs. Bell, after one glance at the couple, dashed passed him like a shot, and in one bound gained the entrance.

With difficulty he overtook her, and perceived in the light of the corridor, that she was pale.

Overlooking her strange action entirely, be-

cause to him the reason for it was so obvious, he proceeded to play his last card for that night. "Let me bring you my magazines," he smiled wickedly. "May I drop them in to-morrow afternoon—at least they may be different?"

She dared not trust herself to answer. Her whole body was trembling, for in mounting the steps without, had she not brushed against her husband's coat sleeve? All she had strength to do, was to nod good night as she hastily left him.

The thought possessed her that she, Lillian Forester, could only touch her husband's coat sleeve and rush by. Nothing more was left to her now. The other woman had stolen all that was worth while—and in her agony she threw herself upon the bed and wept.

CHAPTER X.

The description which Mrs. Josiah Grimes had given Winkler of her late governess, the person suspected of the theft of her jewels, ran, like this; "pretty girl, dark fluffy hair, blue eyes, slight, medium height, plainly dressed in dark blue suit," and was marked down in his little red note book as were all the details of the case. This description had been rather side-tracked on account of the latter information which pointed to a disguise. The criminal was disguised, dressed as a widow. That early suspicion had materialized into a fact; and the dark blue suit no longer figured in the evidence.

However, it will be remembered that a person answering in every detail to this description, dark blue suit included, had arrived at Les Quatre Vents and right under the nose of the detective made enquiries as to rates, etc., and that Harry K. Lawrence the head clerk in the office had, rather boldly to be sure, directed her to "Rainbow House" situated on the beach; said house being a second rate place kept by the young man's mother.

The young woman in question, on following

his directions discovered Rainbow House to be a quiet place of moderate rates, agreeable both to her taste, and purse, and has duly taken up residence there. She found Mrs. Lawrence, the young man's mother, a kind, hospitable woman, who took a personal interest in her and even though the little extra attentions were given for "Harry's sake" the girl's holiday was proving of great benefit to her. Harry Lawrence had hurried home that day to ascertain whether the girl had followed his directions or not, and on finding that she had, he experienced a feeling of gladness that had increased with each day's passing ever since.

She was a pretty girl with dark fluffy hair, just as the description stated, only on this evening I am referring to, instead of being dressed in a dainty blue suit, she wore a white linen dress trimmed with pipings of blue.

She sat on a rock in the sand, and he lounged at her feet.

Across the ocean, the sun threw back rays of gold and flooded the sky with tints of flame and purple. A warm breeze fanned their faces and played pranks with the stray curls on her forehead.

"Why so pensive?" he questioned. "You've hardly said a word since I came."

"I am thinking," she replied, toying with a tight paper roll in her hand.

"You can think alone," he ventured.

"I have," she confided, "almost steadily for the last week—but I seem to arrive nowhere."

"What is the roll in your hand?"

"Only a newspaper."

"Funny way to treat it."

"You are rude, Harry Lawrence."

"Sorry—what were you thinking about?"

"Don't know if I dare tell you," she said meeting his eyes.

"Very well," he appeared highly huffed, "I guess I'm no good, not worth trusting."

"You are," she corrected impulsively, "please don't think that—but it might be serious."

"If it didn't matter, I suppose you would throw it over easy, but serious—good night—not for me."

"Your slang is perhaps amusing if not edifying, Harry," the girl chided gently, unrolling the paper as she spoke and handing it to him. "Read this," pointing to a certain article, "but first promise—cross your heart—that what you read there, will not pass your lips till I give you permission. It means everything to me—life and reputation." He caught her hand almost roughly, "Alice, I'd swear anything if you asked me—

I cross my heart, and may I be hanged if I repeat a word of it, till you say—but, by Jove, you make my bones shake. What's the racket?"

"Read it," she replied.

When he finished, he laid it down and looked up wonderingly, "What's the trick?" he asked much puzzled.

The article he had read was the same that Winkler the detective, and Robert Smith had discussed a few days previous.

Her cheeks were red but she looked him square in the eyes. "Mrs. Josiah Grimes employed me last September to be governess to her children. I gave up my position there a little more than two weeks ago. As far as I can understand from the article, the necklace disappeared the day I did and without doubt, I am "the suspect"—the Haynes Agency is employed to "run down" she went on, her voice never wavering, "I have been trying to remember everything in regard to my leave taking and feel sure that I did not mention to anyone where I had decided to go, but somehow they seem to have discovered, or how could they employ anyone to find me? I didn't steal the necklace—you believe that, don't you?" her appeal was very simple, as a child might to one whom she felt sure would understand, but without waiting his reply

she continued, "If they know I am here there will be someone after me."

His fists tightened, "I'd blow his brains out," he said through his teeth.

"I couldn't prove my innocence," she went on, her voice quivering, "and detectives are such rough men. My mother lives in Albany, and it would kill her if anything like that happened. People said Josiah Grimes was so mean that he'd take the clothes from your back if you couldn't pay, and she, makes me think of a wolf, I'm afraid of her."

"The she-devil, to suspect you," he broke out. "Why, a girl like you couldn't no more steal a thing than fly to Jupiter. Say, little girl," and his hand patted hers ever so gently, "you leave it to me. I'll run my brains on high gear all night, and think of a way out; so don't you worry—not a little bit—you just shut those blue blinkers of yours and forget it. I've a scent for detectives, so just rest quiet till I see you again. Nobody'll nosy around here looking for you; I'll see to that; and if he does, he'll very soon see stars through his veil—trust me," he said, looking up into her smiling, misty eyes and very gently pressing the hand that lay near. "You'll not be sorry."

Meanwhile Winkler grew impatient; the case

had to some extent been taken out of his hands, since Smith joined the chase. When viewed in perspective, his assistance had seemed desirable, but now in the light of the present situation it became a question. As yet Smith had brought in no report, and what was more aggravating still, appeared to shun the detective's society. Any advance on his part had been coldly repulsed. This, coupled with the insistent impression that his own position would soon be that of "second fiddle," irritated him greatly. He not only grew impatient, but antagonistic. A bulldog expression stiffened his lower jaw, and steeled his keen black eyes. He became fully determined to bring the whole thing to a finish without waiting further evidence, and while thus storming and fuming with himself, came face to face with his assistant Smith.

"Hello, Chief!" he called out, ironically.

Smith was on his way to inquire for his mail. "Glad to see you so jocular," he sharply retorted in anything but a compatible frame of mind, for he had knocked twice at Mrs. Alice Bell's door that morning, and had received no answer--for two cents he would "pitch the game."

"Anything doing," asked Winkler his jaw set.

"No," snapped Smith, "not a thing."

They paced down the hall to the desk together.

Smith sent a telegram while the detective waited. This done, he turned on Winkler, "Guess this is another knockout, like Tim the Tickler," he threw out.

Winkler flamed up. "Not on your life; she's bagged already; you can quit anytime; I'm going to show my hand."

Harry the Clerk at the desk a foot away stood stock still, his eyes lowered, but his ears strained, listening to every word, while Winkler eyed his friend with anything but friendly interest.

"Say T. T. T.," grinned Smith his mood changing, with his desire to avoid an issue. "Go easy. She's about 'll in; I'll see her to-day." Then, lowering his voice, "Luck's our way, believe me."

"Rather slow," remarked Winkler, frowning deeply. "All very well to cast up Tim the Tickler; but take it from me, if that guy ever puts in his appearance again, I'll cuff him or lose my job."

Smith laughed.

"Last year," continued Winkler with a sneer, stung deeply by Smith's allusion to Tim, "another of his d—d little notes came through the mail to the chief. I didn't mention it, no one knew but us—It said that the sender was still alive and happy. For all I know he's livin' around the corner, raisin' a family."

"What was the character of the notes he used to write in the old days?" asked Smith, keenly alive to the fact that Tim was Winkler's weak spot.

"Aw—just a childish scrawl, always beginning, 'Dear old pal,' then a dribble about the weather, something slushy about his mother, and then, the thing he done right under our nose. He was the 'very devil,'" said Winkler, disgust in every tone.

"He'll come back some day, old man," laughed Smith, lighting a fresh cigar and slapping Winkler on the arm, as he headed for the stairs, "then you'll win your spurs. After giving you a hard chase he'll throw up his hands and you'll cuff him—take my word for it. See you later," he called from the fourth step.

Winkler nodded and walked on, so steeped in his own thoughts that he was all unconscious of the close scrutiny he and his friend had been subjected to from the desk, and which still followed him as he made his way out of the hotel by the side entrance.

Late that afternoon Mrs. Alice Bell opened the door, when Robert Smith knocked, all trace of the tears of the night before had been washed and powdered away, and she had come to the conclusion that in order to remain sane, she must

admit some companionship into the silent hours of her days. Robert Smith was available, and she determined to accept him. After all the hazard was not great.

In anticipating his afternoon call, she had directed more attention to her personal appearance than had been her habit of late. The pursuit in which she was engaged, with its attending complications, had claimed all her time and consideration; lesser concerns had been neglected. Brought up as she had been in the lap of luxury, this new adventure into which she had been compelled to launch alone, threw her wholly upon her own resources, practically for the first time in her life. She missed the attention of her maid, fact she felt helpless without her. For this reason her best gowns lay unpacked in the trunk; she had not even thought of them. Her widow's disguise, and a plain black crepe, for her room had sufficed. Her world had been turned suddenly upside down, and with this mighty upheaval much of her old familiar identity had been lost.

The ultra fashionable Mrs. Guy Forester, had given place to a serious eyed, somberly attired widow, from whom in very truth much of the joy of life had departed.

This afternoon she had come back for a

moment into her own. She had snapped her finger at fate; a fate which was hourly robbing her of youth, and had thrown up her head in defiance of the on-coming desolation, vowing that it would not deprive her of all, nothing more than had already been exacted, and to-morrow she would fight to regain that.

She discovered one of the forgotten gowns and donned it with care. It was of some soft, black, lacy material, and to relieve it, in accordance with her mood, she wore a rich necklace of pearls.

The pearls caught his eye immediately, and for a moment he experienced a mad desire to seize them and run. Undoubtedly they were "the jewels" and this poor simple woman, suspecting no intrigue, desired to flaunt before him her treasure, enjoying for one brief moment the fulfilment of all her dreams.

After the mad desire to seize the necklace, lock the door, then run to notify Winkler, had passed, Robert Smith looked upon her in pity. "That a woman, and such a woman should stoop to become an ordinary thief, simply to satisfy her vanity," engrossed his thoughts for a moment. Her cheeks were flushed, and she still showed unmistakable signs of self-consciousness.

"I suppose you have heard," he began after

she rang for tea, "many of the old New England legends in connection with this historic place?"

She had to deny anything more than a passing knowledge, but was deeply interested in that sort of thing.

His course of procedure was well planned out.

"Years ago," he continued, eyeing her closely as she sat in the chintz covered rocker by the window. Leaning slightly forward he had every opportunity of observing her expression, and it was his desire to watch her every movement. The story he was about to relate would cause her to tremble—there was no doubt about that. She was a poor weak thing, this bundle of vanity. A sharp lesson was what she needed, and he was glad that Winkler had "let him in on it." She was an empty-headed, frumpish woman, and deserved no pity. He began his story with zest.

"Years ago," he repeated, smiling almost wickedly into her wondering blue eyes "Les Quatre Vents was the scene of stormy times—that is the original house—a country house of some pretension even for those days I believe, and owned in turn by bitter enemy to king and country. The oldest tales bear out the fact that deception of one kind or another, has followed its history right down through the century." He leaned a little further forward, and his smile be-

came almost insolent. She listened with interest and looked up eagerly for him to continue.

That hadn't even made her wince; he continued to eye her intently "intrigue of all kinds —theft," he paused.

She toyed with the pearls at her neck.

"Precious documents, meaning life and death to many, have been hidden here. Men have fled to this place thinking to escape the law, thinking in their error that in some way they would not have to pay the penalty for their evil deeds."

"How interesting," she commented smiling in response to his eagerness.

He cursed under his breath. The woman showed more brass than he expected. "This was not her 'first offence,'" he concluded mentally. He would not spare her, she deserved no pity, and should receive none.

"The fun of it is," he laughed, showing his teeth, "that no one ever escaped (this was not true); the law got them, sooner or later, usually sooner. It always does, you know." He looked meaningfully at her.

"I don't know much about the law," she replied, still interested.

He wanted to say "that she would know more before she was much older" but refrained, add-

ing instead, "Strange thing about criminals, thieves especially," this with emphasis "the false notion they have of covering their tracks, instead of making their 'get away' while the 'going's good.' " He felt sure she would understand these terms "They hang round, play with time and in the end get run in near home. It takes a clever brain to make a success of crime and only a few succeed. The first offence 'gets them' as a rule; then, once spotted they are never safe; no chance for them after the law 'takes their picture.' The most of them live up to their reputation after that."

"It is unjust, isn't it," she defended, "the law is not justice; it breeds criminals, instead of curing them. I have always felt sorry for the poor things caught by it."

She could not fool him by such camouflage, although he had to concede her a degree of shrewdness. It was not so easy as he had expected. She was showing fight—this was a surprise.

"But why talk of criminals in general?" she asked "I thought you were to tell me a tale of olden days, of perhaps one poor criminal in particular; I always love a story."

He grinned wickedly, very well, she should have it; she wanted it, and, by jove, he'd give it

to her. He had a winner, never before in his life had he felt so keen to set a trap that would catch. His feeling for this exquisitely dressed brazen woman before him—he knew she was such—was almost disgust. The law was to be commended at times, and never more than in this case. He grew hard—let it take its course.

"Old time tales are all very well," he told her, with almost a sinister expression curling his lips, "but the best of them pale before the realities of the present day," he was so intense that she wondered whether or not she had been wise to accept his friendship, and as he continued she instinctively turned from him to look out of the window.

"At this very time," he went on, watching her closely, "I know on good authority that a thief has taken rooms in this hotel."

She was naturally alarmed. "What a terrible thing," she said, "Should the office not be notified?"

"She will not steal any more," he told her, bluntly.

"She? A woman?" She began to think of her own valuables. "Should we not have some protection? I had no idea people of that kind ever came to this sort of place."

So she was banking on that to carry her

through. She wasn't so shrewd after all, he told himself.

Lillian Forester was not a coward. After the first surprise and fear at the presence of evil so near, she became curious, "but how do you know?" she asked, turning innocent eyes to him. "What is she like? Where is her room?"

"I know," he stated, severely, "that her room is not far from here."

"You make me nervous. I suppose these keys could be duplicated. I do think if you know all this, Mr. Smith, you should notify the management. It is not fair to the guests."

"She is harmless," he said, "for she is afraid of the law. It almost has her; her last chance is gone," he hesitated, becoming puzzled at her attitude. Hers was surely not the fear of a hunted creature—still she was playing—the woman was pale and on the verge of a collapse.

"Oh, well," there was relief in her tone, "they will take her away soon. It would only alarm everybody to know, I suppose. What did the poor thing steal?"

"A necklace," his voice was hard, and he looked at the pearls around her neck, meaningly.

Her face brightened. "Perhaps one of your family lost them—you seem to know so much about it. I'm sorry, and hope you'll recover it

without any further trouble." This explained his rather peculiar manner, she thought.

"No," he retorted, sharply, "but I know all about the whole thing." She would have to break down before that.

She had turned to the window, and suddenly her cheeks flushed, as with a quick movement she pulled the curtains together.

He leaned over, and looked through the lace, and instantly became confused. On the rustic seat facing the promenade directly below their window, looking up and pointing with his cane to the turret above them, was the stranger friend of his beloved Alice. Alice, her head held back, followed his gaze, and for a moment seemed to be looking directly at them.

The incident embarrassed him, and he forgot what he had been saying.

Lillian Forester was the first to recover her composure. She left the window and stood before the table at the further end of the room. Her manner was cold, and he sensed his dismissal.

"Thank you for keeping me company this afternoon, Mr. Smith." She held out her hand. "Come again, will you? But let us talk of other things. I shall be afraid to close my eyes all night."

If he had been Winkler, an old hand at the game, he would have known what to say, but being Robert Smith, he flunked, just at the critical moment when the game was nearly up, another move, and it the right one, would have "nailed it." Whom had she seen from the window? He had thought to discover this, but the other scene had disconcerted him. The consciousness of his own embarrassment, which must have been evident to her, disturbed him.

Just that moment was needed in which to recover her balance, and she used it. In an effort to appear concerned about his trouble, she added, "Don't worry about the necklace. Your friend, or whoever it is, who has lost it has only lost something which money can replace. There are greater losses that money cannot return to us."

"Getting sorry, lady," he commented dryly under his breath as he walked down the corridor "sentimental bosh; but you are as well as caught; no chance for you now. The pearls won't adorn that pretty neck much longer; but, 'pon my soul, you play your game well. Hang it all, it must have taken some courage to wear those pearls. She took a big chance, and I'm darned if she's not the nerviest piece I ever came across."

CHAPTER XI.

"She has the goods on her," Smith confided to Winkler as they watched the crowd on the beach.

"Proof?" questioned the keen wits of the law, after winking his right eye, and clicking his right thumb.

"All the proof necessary; saw them with my own eyes."

"Look here," Winkler exploded. "Say it again."

"It's true," stated Smith.

"Then, why in the name of G— didn't you nab her? I've hung around here for over two weeks, just to get proof and here you were looking those pearls in the face and flunking. Whizz it. Man—Oh, I say, Smith, I'm so d—m mad, I could bust."

"Get it off Winkler; get it off your chest," advised Smith, attempting to laugh, but not in the mood for it. "Then ease up and we'll discuss the thing sanely."

After Smith related his experience of the previous day, Winkler could find no words to express his opinion on the nerve of the woman. It had all other records beaten. "She's a real one

and no mistake," he concluded. "If she attempts to make a 'get away' to-night, 'nothing doing.' If the knob of her door turns, I'm there. After the rooms get clear to-morrow morning, I'll 'clinch her' Smith. At a place like this these things have to be done with a degree of delicacy. She'll not whimper, believe me. I know her breed, good at bluffing but when it comes to the real thing they 'cave in.' I'm the hound that gets the fox every time T. T. T. goes into port all sails out. I tell you, Smith —the 'Haynes Agency,' " it was beginning to be evident that Winkler had taken a drop too much at dinner, "is Thomas Timothy Timmins, T. T. T., 'Winkler' if you like—but it's me. I'm the brains; I'm the push; I'm the man they all want. Everybody knows me, Smith; everybody knows how I make the scoundrels wriggle; how I put the fear of the Lord into their upper storeys and the fear of the law into their legs. When I set my eyes on them, it's 'hands up.' Remember Tim the Tickler? He couldn't fool me now. I'd just like to see him try any of his tricks," Winkler bragged. Smith was so disgusted that he turned away in annoyance. The whole thing seemed horrible. He had a vision of the woman "caving in" next morning when the detective surprised her.

Only a few hours ago the chase attracted him; now, it repulsed. Hounding women was no man's game, and he felt slightly sorry for her. No doubt she deserved it, but what did that matter, the thing was pitiful anyway. He rather abhorred himself for his part in it, was glad it was over, and sincerely hoped that he would never see her again.

Winkler "stepping on air" crossed the rotunda to the elevator. He held his checked vest well out in the front, and now and then patted his gold chain affectionately. His tie was bright red, and ornamented with the latest in rings, a single diamond set in jet, a present to himself from his last "reward." His black silk peaked cap, sat rather far back on his head, and his eyes snapped with a peculiar brilliance. The "on guard" expression had gone from his countenance and an "off guard" smile spread over his face. He was glad to be alive to-night, "the world was a rosy old place."

"Message for you, sir," he was hailed from the desk. "Handed in an hour ago," said Harry K. Lawrence, taking a letter from box 221.

Winkler grinned. "From my sweetheart," he joked, shoving it in his outside coat pocket.

Harry, the clerk, turned quickly, and entered the office to the rear, closing the door, but t'

were little horizontal strips of glass inserted in squares in the upper portion of the door, and he stood with his eyes close up to one of these—he was grinning.

Winkler strutted over to a lounge near the entrance, and lazily took the letter from his pocket. He looked twice at the address on the envelope, the writing reminded him of something—what was it? A scowl puckered his forehead.

Another second and he cut it open impatiently. It bore no date, and was written in a scrawly school girl hand. He felt quivers run down his spine. "Dear old pal," it began. His hand shook and his legs not any too steady that night, felt inclined to follow suit, then taking a long courageous breath, he read on, "Sorry to trouble you again, old boy, for no doubt you believe me dead and buried long ago, but you were kind to me in the old days—you allowed me the pleasure of living and here I am safe and sound as a bell, not even punctured anywhere. The days have been hot lately, so hot that even my hide required a lower temperature, so I hiked it down to this tempting place in my car. I can't tell you the make for perhaps even you may feel malicious towards me yet. I wouldn't trust you at any rate. It would be like putting temptation in your way, and that's not right, is it? You

certainly did 'desire me' in the old days and no mistake, but I knew your number, and the points of your waxed moustache—say Wink, you really should take it off—those points can be seen a block away. Now don't be sore old man, I'm just kiddin' you a bit. You know I have a real affection for you. I owe a lot to you." Winkler grew more shaky and felt that every hair on his head had assumed a perpendicular angle, "and I couldn't bear you a grudge old Twistie, not if I tried. We used to call you Twistie, in the old days, because you were always twisting the points of that moustache of yours. You were proud of it and it does you credit and no mistake. Yesterday I watched you amble along the beach, and took you all in. Some get up, eh Winkler, and that chest ornament's a stunner. Some poor gink paid for that. As for me I left the pat. of sin long ago. My last haul, perhaps you remember it, will keep me in luxury to the end of my life and my wife after me. Yes, I'm married now and my mother died a while ago, thank God, never knowing me to be anything but what I was—get me? You should see my kid—me all over again, although his mother's a peach. I've some taste believe me. A curly-headed little beggar with laughing blue eyes. Oh, yes, I'll never be bad any more. If you see

him on the beach, you'll know he's mine—keep your hands off him. But now listen to me, here's the important part of this letter. You remember my style, the best till the last. Well, I aven't got over my old habit of roaming around at night. Funny but I can't break it off. Seeing you the other day, set me thinking, you weren't here for no holiday, not you. Some poor devil must be lying low when you're about, so I watched, just kept my eye roaming around you know, and listened. It was last night, and they didn't make any noise, they never do, you know that." Winkler felt his breath coming and going in jerks. "And they walked like cats—two of them. I don't know whether they're the guys you're after but I'll chance it. You did me many a good turn in the old days and I'd like to pay you back. One was a woman in black, I couldn't tell much about the man. They buried something—I couldn't see what and didn't like to spoil their game by buttin' in. It looked like a box. You know the white pine that stands on the point behind the lookout—well, five feet from there to the right, with some fresh moss laid over the place, a dinky spot and no mistake. 'nuf said, don't be rash, old Wink. Go easy, they're no chickens, believe me. They don't even belong to my class, some lower strata still.

If a man's a crook, says I, let him be a gentleman crook. So long, and good luck. From your old friend, Tim the Tickler."

Winkler's face was red, just as red as the note book he drew from his inside vest pocket and held in his shaking hand, while he laid the letter between its pages. He felt that the walls were studded with eyes—all staring him, and that some devil, somewhere was laughing at him. Somebody was trying to make a fool of him.

Harry the Clerk was nowhere to be seen, the place was singularly quiet. He looked around—a thin man with long legs snored in the chair to his left. The night was oppressive. He got up; his legs were not quite so shaky, and the smile that had suggested irresponsibility was gone. His checked vest was not quite so prominent—it even suggested looseness and he gave his peaked cap a savage thrust down.

He walked over to the desk. "I want the head clerk," he said in a thick voice.

Harry Lawrence emerged from the rear office. Winkler beckoned him to one side and lowered his voice. "Do you remember what sort of person left that letter, you gave me a moment ago?"

"Yes sir. Gentleman in white flannels."

"Humph," said Winkler and meditated. "Anything peculiar about him?" he quizzed.

"No. Big man, clean shaven, dark," Harry supplied almost too readily.

"Thanks," said Winkler as he turned and went out by the side entrance.

The following morning after an early breakfast Robert Smith tramped the length of the beach to the light house on Eagle Point and had a chat with Philippe the light house keeper. He followed the old man up the little winding steps of the tower, and sat there a long time watching the distant horizon and listening to Philippe's chatter. It was evident that Robert Smith sought diversion and for some special reason desired to remain away from Les Quatre Vents. His mood was such that the greater the distance he accomplished between himself and the fashionable resort the more satisfied grew his expression. It was also obvious that necessity prompted the mood, for after an interval of some hours had elapsed he evinced an impatience to return and with a jauntiness of step and twirl of his cane that only a happy man could accomplish, he tramped along the beach towards the hotel.

He kept thinking to himself, "that if the other chap would be kind enough, to take himself off in like manner he might begin to enjoy himself." One annoyance had been removed, the other re-

mained. The detective and "his arrest" would be well on their way to police headquarters by now. That much was assured. Down in his heart Robert Smith pitied the poor woman. He began to wonder what sort of a home she had come from, and who was to blame. "This woman or her parents."

Smith's mother had been dead for many years, but to him she was a cherished memory. Whenever he thought of a mother he pictured his own, a frail, delicate woman with snow white hair, sweet, gentle face and thin, white hands that clasped tight. It had always been a wonder to him that he could be her son. He spent a few uncomfortable moments with himself, as he stepped smartly along, wishing that he had been able to bring about a state of repentance with the woman, sufficient at least to render unnecessary any further publicity to the case. If he had only been able to persuade her to confess to him, and give up the jewels, he knew that the thing could have been hushed up, well enough. In fact he felt that he would have been happy to help her. As it was he had done his best. He reasserted that, to his momentary satisfaction—and it had been of no avail. She had outwitted him, still more, her conduct had assured him of her guilt, she was no unwilling victim, and she had the

heart of a thief. In thinking it all out he had to conclude that this was the case.

He breathed a huge sigh of relief—the thing had not been as much to his liking as he had anticipated, and he was more than glad to be free of it, and he hoped that fate would keep him from ever meeting the woman again.

He could not get away from a slight consciousness of guilt, and began wondering if there had been a scene at the hotel, or if she had gone quietly. Anyhow he had not been there to witness it. Winkler was a brag and no doubt at times a bully. The place was well rid of him. Again he pitied the woman in such rough hands, "The way of the transgressor was hard."

After lunch he made his way to his room, to answer some correspondence, neglected on account of his "aid to the law," and did not leave it again until the dinner hour.

The afternoons return to normal conditions, had driven all thought of Winkler from his mind, and rather lonesomely he again took up the trail of Alice his beloved, and her new friend. Evidently the man was not easily shaken, for he followed her like Mary's Lamb, everywhere she wandered he was by her side. He was tired watching the fellow. He felt indignant, and it was right that he should. Very soon he

would inquire of Alice her mind on the matter, and if she preferred this man's company permanently, he would go back to his business and forget her. Not that he thought he could, but he told himself that he would try. An honest endeavour is half the victory. At any rate he had had enough of this foolery. He was tired of the place; the people he met failed to interest him, and he grew impatient. He was not jealous—he knew that, but he did not altogether care for the man's appearance. There was something a trifle weak about him; still, if Alice wished to choose him, he had confidence enough in her judgment to believe that she would choose wisely. He was not jealous—he kept repeating this to himself—he only wanted to end the matter one way or the other, that was all.

As he joined the throng in the hall making their way to the dining room, there suddenly loomed up before him, a black and white check suit, flashy gold chain, bright red tie, black silk peaked cap and waxed moustache—Winkler.

"Come with me," he said, leading the way to a table well back.

Robert Smith followed silent. He resented Winkler's reappearance and showed it. "Going to reside here permanently?" he snapped as they became seated.

Winkler was plainly ruffled, out of sorts, and his temper was short. For once in his experience he found himself against a stone wall. He could come to no decision on the matter. His one strong point, circumstantial evidence failed this time to lend him its accustomed assistance. He felt there was a plot in the air. More and more he became imbued with the idea that Les Quatre Vents, the ultra fashionable watering place was now the rendezvous of a gang. He felt like a dog with a muzzle; he wanted to bite but could not. He regarded Tim the Tickler's letter as a fake, but from whom, and why? Or was it genuine? His mind was in a turmoil. He had forgotten his determination to effect an arrest that morning, so that for a moment his friend's remark was without point until it was repeated.

"Intend residing here permanently?" Smith lifted his brows in anything but a pleasing manner.

In a flash Winkler remembered his intention for that morning and the same instant threw up a camouflage. "Thanks to your blundering," he spoke almost under his breath and between his teeth, "no chance for me to pull anything off yet."

"You idiot," snapped Smith taken in the

heat of his temper. "She gave way to me what you couldn't have discovered in a month."

"That's all you know about it," Winkler, retorted, sharply, "your eyes are not 'the eyes of the law' and mine are; there's the difference, see?"

"'Eyes of the law' be fiddled; my eyes are the eyes of a sane man, and they can see all around, and up, and over a pair like yours."

"Oh, blow it," he wanted to swear at Smith but dare not "I'm so gaul darn mad I could—"

"Well, go ahead," said Smith, "but don't ask me ever again; I'm done with the whole d—m business. You've missed the surest thing yet, that's all I know."

Winkler decided to use tact, both to cover up his own purpose and to pacify Smith. "See here, man. Slow down; let off steam. It's all in the game, Smith. I spoke hastily; the truth of the matter is, on thinking things over with my greater experience as guide, I decided to keep my eyes on her a little longer. She's mine as sure as the bank. I have a little trick up my sleeve that, I'd like to catch her with the 'goods on her,' myself, see? You have another chat with her and I'll just nosy about, trying out my own little game, see?"

"Stuff and nonsense," said Smith in disgust.

"Play your own little game if you like but I'm done. I've had enough to last me for the rest of my natural life. Shouldn't wonder anyway, if she's not as bad as she looks. I've had my fill of hounding women; you're welcome to the rest of the fun."

"Have it your own way, old man," retorted the detective pleasantly, understanding human nature well enough to feel assured that Smith once on the scent, would likely return to it again.

Smith lighted his cigar, and Winkler pushed out his chair. "So long," with a nod to Smith, "I'm off. No, thanks; I'll smoke outside. Got something to do to-night. See you later."

"Keep your eyes on the dark corners, Winkler she'll likely be hiding in one, wearing those beads," Smith sent him off with this, but the detective, without heeding, walked quickly out of the dining room.

Winkler had stayed under cover, so to speak, all morning. Being very much in the dark as to what conclusion to arrive at, or what course of action to pursue, it seemed wiser to keep in hiding until he could come out in the light with a firm step. There were eyes watching him, of that he felt certain. It was his game to confuse if possible the gang that thought they could fool with him,

the gang that counted so far out as to think to play "puss in the corner with the eyes of the law."

That there was a gang he felt to be a fact indisputable; he was cock sure of it. Just how many he could not say—probably six at any rate—and they were there to pull something off. It was up to him to discover what that something was and nab them in the act, which would be a comparatively easy feat if the gang was an ordinary one. But Tim the Tickler and his gang presented another proposition.

He was beginning to feel that the letter might be genuine, it was longer than Tim's usual but again, it bore all the ancient sign posts. Surely no one but Tim the Tickler could have written it. His memory after fifteen years interlude was still strong on "Tim" and circumstantial evidence could not be denied. The more he thought of it, the more firmly convinced he became that the letter was from Tim the Tickler, that clever rogue of the old days who had pulled the wool over the eyes of the law so successfully; that mystery man who perpetrated all sorts of crimes, remaining himself ever elusive—a man in whose spirit mingled the greatest daring and the greatest shrewdness; a criminal holding a unique place in the annals of crime.

His portrait did not hang in the rogue's gallery, and no one had ever seen him to know him. A complete mystery had always surrounded him, but Winkler believed, and with the thought came added stature, that to him, Thomas Timothy Timmins, T. T. T., Winkler of the Haynes Agency, Boston, had been given the envious opportunity of running this fox to his hole, and at the same time crowning himself with a glory that would never wane.

There was no doubt that Alice Bell, the thief governess, belonged to this gang. The case that had a short time before seemed so easy, began now to assume the appearance of the "real thing." Winkler was not for a moment hoodwinked into accepting at its face value, the kindness of Tim the Tickler in advising him of the hiding place of the jewels. He wagered twenty to one with himself, that the jewels had long ago been exchanged or sold. The pearls Smith saw were paste. The "crime gang" had come to Les Quatre Vents for another purpose, and Mrs. Grimes' necklace was only one of their hauls. Something big was in the air, and they thought to bamfoozle him in order to slip the trick under his nose. It was shrewd of them—Tim the Tickler had not grown rusty with the years. The cunning brain was still in evidence, but this time

—well—Winkler expanded his front portion with entire satisfaction and winked his right eye, and clicked his right thumb, and walked pompously out of the hotel.

They thought to bamfoozle him—he would show them who could do the bamfoozling. "He laughs best who laughs last." He would put "one over on them." He would go to the place described, dig for the jewels and go away dejected at not finding them. That would give the gang the impression that he believed it. He was in no hurry and could afford to play their game; the reward would be worth it; anything would be worth it; yes—even to the half of his bank account, and a few other bank accounts added. The man who could walk in with Tim the Tickler need fear for nothing.

The indecision of the morning had now given place to a super confidence, quite amazing even to Winkler himself. One clue had led to another until mentally he had the whole thing pat. He summed it up thus: the gang intended pulling off something "big" right under his nose; he was not asleep; so far, so good. He waited their next move with impatience.

Just about dusk he made his way quickly along the north promenade, turning from the walk onto the wide path that led to the lookout. He

felt that eyes were upon him, yet he showed no signs of it. Looking around deliberately, when a few feet away from the "lone white pine," he perceived that no one was in sight.

No doubt the shadows held eyes and ears, but the path was empty. Rather carelessly he pushed with the toe of his boot, the moss that gave unmistakable evidence of recent planting, and kicked it out of place. Then glancing around rather hurriedly, took from his pocket a little hand spade, and began to shovel the earth quickly, and deliberately from the fresh filled in hole. After going down not more than a foot he felt about eagerly. There was nothing there, as he had expected.

He looked up and scowled into the shadows, then acting on impulse and without special purpose but to emphasize his disappointment, he gave the spade a vicious thrust into the hole. Quickly his body stiffened; he leaned far over and peered in. The change in his attitude was complete, but his recovery so rapid that anyone watching could hardly have perceived it. Without energy he shoveled the earth back again and placed the moss over it.

Then very much preoccupied he strutted slowly down the path to the hotel and entered by the side door.

The time was eight thirty, and the moon more than half full, just showing above the horizon.

Winkler left word at the office to the effect that if anyone inquired for him, he had gone to his room and was not to be disturbed.

Strange to say, during the past few days the office had evinced special interest in the detective and his doings, even to the extent of casually inquiring in regard to his intentions for the day, and dropping different pleasantries about the weather, etc.

Winkler considered this an evidence of his growing popularity with the staff, and regarded it as further proof of that tact and diplomacy, mingled with a certain affability of manner, which he considered his, and which to his mind placed him in the enviable position of being a little above all others in his profession. To use a very vulgar but expressive term, "it tickled his vanity," and Winkler enjoyed to the full such a sensation.

This evening he had special reason for seeking the quiet of his own room. One of "the gang" might inquire his whereabouts at the office, and it was advisable that they should consider him in for the night. Then Smith might have something to say to him, and just now he greatly desired to avoid Smith.

That sudden thrust of his spade into the hole had revealed a condition which he must investigate alone, and in the dead of night. He knew well that in order to avoid the eyes of "the gang" he must finish his work before midnight, the criminals' hours were between twelve and two.

Winkler hoped to work his way unknown to any. "The gang must believe him easy in order to show their hand." He had endeavoured to give that impression, when after digging for the hidden box, his search revealing nothing, he had walked away plainly confused and troubled. That act had been "put on" for their benefit alone; his next would be for his information solely.

There was a box there; the spade had struck something harsh. He must find out the contents of that box, for the letter was still a puzzle until its secret had been revealed.

CHAPTER XII.

In the meantime Robert Smith was turning over in his mind the question as to the advisability of crying "quits," or "carry on," in regard to the case of Alice Bell, thief.

Winkler had something up his sleeve, that much was evident and further still, something which he wished to keep to himself. This discovery introduced a new line of thought, and shed a different light upon the situation.

Robert Smith's curiosity was naturally aroused. For some reason the detective had purposely changed his intention of the morning. Alice Bell was still at large. Winkler must have received some clue unknown to him the preceding night.

Robert Smith decided to investigate matters for himself.

The only means open to him, lay in another interview with Alice Bell, the thief. Her actions would betray any new developments, and suddenly, the thought came to him, that perhaps she had already made her "get away"; if so, was Winkler cognizant of the fact, and why did he remain after the "bird had flown?"

His curiosity soon got the better of him to the extent that, notwithstanding his recent determination to have nothing more to do with the case, as he had intimated to Winkler not an hour before, he decided to make another call upon Alice Bell that evening. Besides, more and more he yielded to a feeling of pity for this hunted woman.

Behind the concern which he felt in the case as such, lay a deeper interest in the thief herself. Years ago he had enjoyed "the hunt" for its own sake; the law was authority, and recognizing it as such, it must be obeyed. The offender deserved his or her punishment, and it was just that it should be so. To-day he realized the trend his thoughts had been taking through the years between. He had seen men and women go under, when the tide had been too strong for them, and he pitied them.

Winker was in the game to run this particular fox to her hole, and his pride lay in the chase. But Smith pitied the fox, had been pitying her all along but only now acknowledged it.

Then, Robert Smith was somewhat of an idealist. He believed in the theory, that somewhere in the blackest heart gleams a bit of white, and he was of the opinion that it was his duty in this case to discover that patch of white. He

wished to unearth that better nature before it was too late.

Acting immediately on this decision he knocked upon Mrs. Alice Bell's door. There was no reply. He listened; there was no sound.

The bird had flown; that was Winkler's secret.

Then, just as he was about to turn away, Mrs. Bell opened the door, and greeted him with a smile.

During the past few days Lillian Forester had come into a better knowledge of herself and the emotions actuating her. She was now able to consider her problem after a sane fashion. The passion which at first dominated her, had now ceased to dictate, and she was discovering a better Lillian Forester, a woman who could rise above the grime of things, and not shrink from the vision of a clouded to-morrow. That which was inevitable had entered into her life. The hurt that it made was there yet, and always would be, but instead of running away from the lash like a mongrel cur, she had turned to face it, and in so doing stood a good chance of getting the better of it.

Besides, she had decided to go home and leave her husband to pursue his further pleasure with the "new love" alone and unhampered. She

had herself defeated the object of her coming, and was now willing to allow fate to decide the issue; whatever happened, she would not interfere. On her husband's shoulders alone would rest the whole responsibility. This change of attitude had been brought about by a change of thought, no outside influence was responsible for it.

Within the course of a few weeks she had matured, she had come to Les Quatre Vents a spoiled child, and was leaving it a chastened woman.

"I am feeling greatly improved," she told him in answer to his question as to her health, "so much so that I intend returning home the first of the week."

"Indeed? She might be wrong there," he commented inwardly. Aloud, "Your mother is living?" he questioned.

"Yes."

"And no doubt lonely for you."

"Probably; although she did not say. My mother is a widow. Father died some years ago." Somehow she yielded to this slight confidence.

"Her father dead; financial difficulties probably"—he scented another motive for the crime. "And your husband—(he must tread gently)

have you been alone long?" He wanted to watch her quibble.

She colored and turned her head away (he noted this).

"He is dead," she said (he was dead to her).

He felt like saying, "so I presume," but instead, "It is good that you have your mother. I remember," he went on, lowering his voice, "my own dear mother; so frail and with the softest white hair. Not for the world would I have caused her pain, (there is something of the egotist in every respectable man); she is dead now many years." He thought this should touch a woman's heart.

"Yes," she replied. "Some mothers, I believe, are like that but mine is different."

"You mean she is selfish?"

"Yes, unconsciously I must have known before that she was, but only now conclude it to be a fact. She did not teach me, any of the worth while lessons of life. I have had to learn them through bitter experience."

He thought this looked bad; frankly, an acknowledgment. Could she mean it as such? "She has been thinking," he concluded to himself, "her conscience is at work." He would yet help her; in fact that was particularly what he wanted to do. He would drive the nail home,

help on the good work. "Let me tell you a story." He looked earnestly into her eyes.

"Not another one about a thief in the hotel," she remonstrated, laughing. He did not smile. How could she play with fire?

"No, but about the same sort of person," he replied seriously.

"Well, well, don't frighten me," she pleaded.

"You are not easily frightened," was his comment as he began, "I had a friend once (this slight departure from the truth he easily excused) whom I have often thought of, a dear woman, who had the deuce of a time."

"Some people are unfortunate," she supplied pleasantly.

"You call it that when through their own error they suffer; but when the hurt comes through another?"

"I would call it a tragedy then." Her eyes felt teary, for her own hurt had come through another.

"You know what I mean?" he asked her.

She did not like his searching eyes. What did the man mean? She turned her head away. "Oh, yes, everybody rubs up against some unpleasant experience," she replied, rather annoyed, "but please go on with your story."

"This little woman," he told her, "was made

to suffer because her only daughter, a beautiful girl (this was a good touch) became a common criminal." He waited, but she did not look up, and he went on, "It broke the mother's heart—for even though a mother appear selfish, her heart suffers just the same when her children fail her."

"Were you ever a Sunday School Teacher?" she questioned, meeting his gaze, "if not, I would advise you to commence as soon as you return to your home. I feel sure any church would regard you as a treasure."

She had the better of him again; he became confused. The woman was as clever as she was tricky.

Just then he noticed that the rings on her fingers were exquisite. "Another haul," he commented mentally. "She never earned enough as governess to buy them."

He grew courageous again. "I feel sorry," he said, "that you resented my remarks on motherhood." He felt like a fool, but must bluff it through some how.

"You are an enigma to me, Mr. Smith," she retorted, head high, "and impress me as unnatural. Why not be your best self; that's what I have been trying to be lately, and I find it a good thing. ("Another confession," he thought.) I

must say, Mr. Smith that I don't care for your manner, nor do I care to hear any more stories. As I said, "keep them for your Sunday School class. Good afternoon."

He wanted to apologize for he knew he had acted the cad, but no—he could not apologize to her. She was playing her game, and he had tried to play his. Each one knew that the other was playing, but she had to all purposes outwitted him.

However, in the end—he did not like to think of her end—it would be a sad one, and she was heading straight for it. No power on earth could stop her now. He was too much of a gentleman to fling a bit of the truth at her as a parting shot, so picked up his hat and walked out. His manner was that of a man who in attempting a rescue had been repulsed.

This was his first attempt at moral suasion and it would without doubt be his last.

A few hours later, at precisely a quarter of twelve, Winkler emerged from his room, his cap well pulled down and his coat buttoned close. He walked down the corridor noiselessly and slipped over the carpeted stairs like a cat. Avoiding the office, he left the hotel by the side entrance, and made his way hastily down the walk to the path leading to the lookout. The

place was deserted. The moon for a moment was hidden by a cloud. He listened. The night was still, just a faint whisper stirred the pines. Did the shadows look sinister? Did they hide some lurking forms? He thought he saw something move, so sauntered over to it and kicked it. The space did not resist him.

"Ugh!" he muttered under his breath. "I thought so."

He peered behind several trees and looked up into the overhanging branches. Nothing but shadow met his gaze.

"Ass," he called himself.

Then stepping quickly over to the scene of his previous digging, he deftly felt for the moss. Moving lightly like a cat, he proceeded to spade out the earth from the hole. Not once did he stop until the metal struck harsh, then leaning down he felt the dimensions of the thing with his hand—slowly unearthed it, and carefully lifted it up endwise.

His countenance did not change; he was about the King's business, a servant of the law, and immune to surprises.

It was an iron box, about ten inches in length and half that through. It was rusty and besmattered with hard dry caked mud, and was locked. It did not feel heavy and when shaken

something rattled within. Resisting the desire to further investigate, as time pressed, he speedily filled up the hole again, then carefully laid the moss back in place and seizing the box by the stiff iron handle, stood up and listened.

Away off in the forest an owl hooted three times—was it a bad omen? Above him in the white pine trees, a little bird twittered sleepily, as though disturbed in a dream.

Winkler pulled his cap low, gave his vest a tug, and started down the path with a quick step.

Suddenly a slight stir caught his ear, and across the path ahead a shadow moved.

Instinctively Winkler drew to one side and dropped the box at the base of the big pine which stood in the deep shadow. When the intruder passed, he would return for it as there were many reasons why he preferred not to be observed with the box, especially at such an hour; besides, the intruder might belong to the "gang"; in such an event the presence of the box would be disastrous.

The next second, he emerged and sauntered down the path, lazily observing the sky, where the fleeting clouds every now and then shadowed the moon.

There was no one on the path.

He closely watched either side, nothing stirred. Walking more slowly he listened, but heard no sound and saw no one.

"Blast it," he muttered between his teeth. "I'd vow I saw a man. Where is he?"

Reaching the board walk, he paced up and down several times, his step quick and light, his senses all alert. Not even a drowsy twittering from the tree tops disturbed the stillness of the night; the little bird had gone to sleep again.

He swore under his breath and between clenched teeth, "Some devil's trick this, I warrant."

At the turn of the path he stood still and looked all about, then walked briskly back to the pine tree. He wished to secure the box and enter the hotel by the side entrance. Reaching the pine he stepped quickly into the shadow, and leaning down felt for the box. Failing to locate it he dropped to his knees, and hastily searched with both hands about the base of the tree.

There was nothing there.

He stood up and examined the tree; had he made a mistake? No, it was here that he had placed the box not five minutes before.

Then fearfully he sought for it, at the base of the tree next, and then the one next to that. Nothing was there; the box was gone.

There was no doubt in Winkler's mind that someone had taken it, the shadow that had moved across the path and probably even now crouched in hiding near. Anger burned within him. He wanted to arouse the staff of the hotel and search the rooms, but reason persuaded him that nothing could be gained by such tactics.

This was a game he had to play without aid. The odds were against him now, but in the end he felt confident of success. He would bide his time. The "gang" had pulled one off on him to-night, but, thank God! there was to-morrow.

Thrusting his hands deep into his trouser pockets, he made his way rapidly to the hotel and entered by the side door.

CHAPTER XIII.

After breakfast Winkler called at the office and beckoned Harry Lawrence, the head clerk, to him.

What he said was whispered and appeared to be thoroughly understood, and agreed to by the other.

Winkler turned away quite satisfied, although it is a question if his suspicion would not have been aroused, had he observed the chuckle the head clerk indulged in immediately his back was turned, and especially had he overheard the conversation which took place in low tones between a certain pretty girl, of medium height, with fluffy hair, and blue eyes, who seemed to equally enjoy the situation, as evidenced by the peals of laughter which came from the rear office when Harry Lawrence related to her an experience which he termed a "side splitter."

But Winkler was nowhere about when this hilarity was indulged in, and was therefore none the wiser. About four o'clock the same afternoon the detective stopped at the office and had another word with Harry. "Has the Bell woman left the building since lunch?" he in-

quired in an under tone, and grinning as though he asked about his best girl.

"Just five minutes ago," replied Harry eagerly, "accompanied by a tall gentleman in dark suit and slouched hat. They motored down the north drive."

Winkler was off like a shot. This was what he had been waiting for. Where was Smith? It would be better to have someone with him. The pair would be slow to suspect another taxi bearing two m^r, even though it did appear to follow.

Just then he met Smith.

"How goes the chase, old man?" the other asked, grinning and lighting a cigar.

Winkler grabbed him by the arm. "Come with me," he ordered, almost running towards the door.

"Taxi," he called, and in another second was speeding down the north drive with Smith by his side.

"Follow that car," pointing to one in the distance hardly recognizable for the dust in its trail. "Never too near, and not too far to lose sight of it. It's worth your while—get me?" he directed the chauffeur, before answering Smith's question as to the meaning of this sudden flight. "She's left in the company of a tall guy, dark

clothes, slouch hat; the 'man in the case' no doubt. They are tryin' to make their get away. We must not lose sight of them, and if they offer fight, I'll leave the woman to you —what do you say, Smith?"

Winkler wanted to handle the man at all costs, for he had a mad idea in his mind, which grew in momentum as they sped along that the man and woman might be "Tim the Tickler" and his wife—.

It seemed "sure as guns." He felt almost jubilant; what would he not give to bracelet that man's wrists!

Smith wore his usual white flannels; he leaned over and shook some dust from the turned-up leg of his trousers while he grinned broadly at the detective. "Don't shove the dirty work onto me; I'd rather engage a man in mortal combat any day than lead a woman to the slaughter."

"Now's the time," suggested Winkler, "to cut that sort of thing out."

"I think I'll leave it all to you, one will likely follow the other," Smith grinned. "I'll just sit by the roadside, and smoke."

Much to their surprise the car ahead seemed in no hurry. It jaunted along now on low gear, and once came to a direct halt on a high vantage ground, apparently with the sole pur-

pose of allowing its occupants to enjoy the scenery.

"It's a ruse," exclaimed Winkler. "They think we'll give the chase up, concluding we've made a mistake; I am up to all their diabolical tricks. One isn't in this sort of work for years for nothing, Smith."

"They don't know who is after them, that's certain," said Smith, patting Winkler on the back, in altogether too jovial a mood to suit the detective. Smith had entered into the chase with almost a boy's interest, wondering how long the suspense would keep up, and just what Winkler intended doing anyway. As far as he could judge the plan was to "arrest them" if they began to bolt, which was hardly a probability, judging by their present rate of speed. It seemed quite apparent to him that the occupants of the car ahead were out on a pleasure trip.

The whole affair would likely end in steam.

Slowly as they watched, the car ahead turned onto a side road, and in a moment became lost to view in a little wood which skirted "Raven's End," a historic old spot sheltering the ruins of a famous revolutionary tavern, where buried somewhere in the close vicinity lay the fortunes of a notorious sixteenth century pirate.

Adventurous spirits had dug for this treasure

until the ground around assumed the appearance of ant hills. Yet the earth divulged nothing of the secret entrusted to its care. The trip to Raven's End was one often taken by guests of the hotel, and always included in a day of sight seeing. It was obvious that Winkler's nerves were keyed up to a high pitch, for he issued orders in staccatoed tones that seemed to Smith, much too imperious for the occasion. In the first place Smith believed that some mistake had been made, for the sight he caught of the woman's hat did not at all resemble the widow's "get up." He argued that as this was Winkler's game, he was not to be disputed; but he had his doubts, and would not have been surprised if at any time the chase should end in a hoax. Then the laugh would be on Winkler.

The detective leaned forward alert, ready to spring, his face red and his eyes bulging.

They had turned down the little road and were now in the woods. The car was not in sight; it had gone through to the clearance beyond. "They mean to leave the car and take to the woods; the station is not a ten minute walk away," whispered Winkler.

As they alighted, he directed the chauffeur to drive the taxi a little to the side and wait. "Hold your ground," he explained, "no matter what

noise you hear. Turn your car about, and be ready to start on a moment's notice." With this he slipped into the man's hand a ten dollar bill. The man grinned, and nodded.

Winkler's vest had got wrinkled up again, so he kept tugging at it as they stepped into the bush. He pulled his cap low, winked his right eye, clicked his right thumb and muttered under his breath, "Whizz it; we've got them, Smith; we'll nail them this time—the brutes."

All the while, like the ringing of Christmas bells, came chiming through his ears the chorus, "Tim the Tickler, he's mine—Tim the Tickler, he's mine."

Crouching low on reaching the edge of the woods, they listened.

Through the trees could be discerned now and again the passing of the pair, on their inspection of the old tavern. A clump of trees nearly hid the ruins from view, so that only an occasional glimpse of the woman's white dress or the man's dark suit was permitted them.

Their voices were low and the breeze in the wrong direction, making it impossible to understand their conversation.

Smith stood some distance behind the detective and gradually felt himself turn cold; the color left his face, and he leaned forward eagerly, staring through the space.

Suddenly a ripple of woman's laughter floated to them—the laughter of Alice his beloved. The suspicion that had turned his blood cold now became a conviction, that caused him to suddenly grab the detective's arm and say between his teeth, "You come out of here, you hound. I know you've made the devil of a blunder; you idiot. Clear out of this; do you hear?"

Winkler did not move; he crouched alert and tense, and not even turned his head towards Smith. His eyes were bulging and he was seeing red.

"Come back, you cur," Smith hissed at him, "you dare to touch those people and I'll knock you senseless. You and your darn game have gone a bit too far."

Winkler faced him and his lips were drawn back in a snarl. "You know her?"

"Yes d—m you."

"What's her name?"

"None of your business."

"I'll tell you," Winkler flung at him, "her name's Alice Bell. She's not the widow, but I've my eye on her; she's in the game, too. A friend of yours eh? Who's the man with her? You don't know—well, that's for me to find out. What's her real name?" He edged up to Smith and eyed him viciously.

"Her name's her own concern and not yours," snapped Smith, laying hold of the detective and forcing him in front of him. "Interfere with her, and you'll know what you are up against. Attend to your own game. Do your dirty work and get out but leave her alone and the man with her too; he's none of your concern."

Winkler wheeled on him, "Who are you?" he demanded, his black eyes narrowing, "Take your paws off me," flinging wide his arms, "I've got your number—Smith, alias So and so; alias—Ugh!"

"Ah get out," Smith threw at him in disgust, though the situation began to appear ludicrous. Winkler's suspicion, his clenched fists and snarling lips—all this disturbance over a matter of names. His Alice must be protected at any cost. Evidently in the last phase Winkler had turned his glasses on him. That was funny. Who in blazes did the man imagine he was? Could the brute suspect him of being a fugitive from the law? The situation could not be improved with any amount of explanation. Winkler was a fool.

"Get out," he said both amused and annoyed. "Go back to your den, Winkler; I'm through with you once and for all. You're the biggest idiot loose. Go home and think it over. You're mixed up; follow your first trail—it's the sure

one—and leave innocent people alone. Try to meddle in my affairs and you'll lose your job. Catch your thief then go back to headquarters and take a rest; your brain is fagged out. Look up old accounts of Tim the Tickler; he's a match for you. Some day he'll come back and tickle you under the chin while you're sleeping."

Smith laughed wickedly at this, for he knew it would open up the old sore.

Winkler had gone several paces ahead and now turned quickly surveying Smith from head to foot, "Gentleman in white flannels; big man, clean-shaven, dark"—Harry's description of the man who had left the letter at the desk, and whom Winkler believed to be Tim the Tickler. The man he had thought to be Tim, and the woman with him, whom they had followed on a blind trail could go to the dickens. He had made one huge mistake. They no doubt belonged to the gang but this fellow—he was the prize. Winkler knew his number; he knew now whose trail to follow, but the revelation was so amazing, so astounding that he paled under it.

"I'll walk," said Smith, returning Winkler's impudent stare with interest.

Paying no heed to this, Winkler turned and made his way through the bush to the waiting taxi. "Drive home," he ordered sharply, "my friend is walking."

In Winkler's mail that night was another letter. He opened it with nervous fingers. In all his eventful life few days stood out with greater significance than the one almost past. It had really been too much for him. He was over forty, and his heart had taken to fluttering. The letter was written in a schoolgirl scrawl, and began.

"Dear old pal, I'm sorry to trouble you, seems to me I'm livin' in a state of continual sorrow, sorrow for my past, which uses up every night. Sorrow for my present when I look in the glass and picture the man I might have been if I hadn't that scar over my right eye you gave me once when you winked yours, and aimed something into the dark with your left. I think I said I wasn't even punctured, for I call this a beauty mark. It might come in handy some day for identification purposes. That's a bad habit of yours, winking that right blinker—why don't you cut it out? Then, I'm sorry when I think of all the cash I might of had if I hadn't turned honest. This is the greatest burden I have to bear. In the words of the Apostle it amounts to 'a thorn in the flesh.' But I don't bear you no grudge, Twistie, old boy, as I told you before. My heart's as gentle as a lamb's, always was, for if you recollect I never was vicious; my worst

crime was to rob the rich who have mor'n they can ever use, and the magnates, them that make their heap by grindin' the poor, tuckin' a few cents on this and on that a pound, pulling the thing a bit further off from the man who needs it the most. Well, I'm not going to moralize, not to you, Winkler. I'm going to apologize. Find it hard to swallow that? but here it is. That little secret I let you into, in my last letter, the tree, the box, and the starry night—you get me? Well, old pal, I played a trick, a mean trick on you. Since turning honest my conscience has turned tender; that's why I feel inclined to be contrite, besides it shows me up in my true light. I guess I'm not so far reformed as I thought. You understand how bad this makes me feel on account of the kid, my kid wi.h the curly hair, a regular beaut and no mistake; I want him to grow up honest. Well there's no use in going around the bush. I want to thank you first for shoving that box right on to my feet last night in the shade of the old pine tree, right on to my toes Winkler. The temptation was too great, my old trick of taking what didn't belong to me came back all of a sudden and I had to lift it. I apologize, old man, for it must have embarrassed you. They were the folks you were after then—I thought so. Well, anyway you

know now where the necklace is. My wife likes it, and it is becoming, even if I say it myself. To-day is her birthday, so it came in handy. If I find I've reformed more than I think, I'll send it back to you. I'm sort of doing this as an experiment, but anyway, I'll leave the box, such a beauty, under the first seat to the west of the lookout path to-night, anytime after nine. You're welcome to it, but it's empty now. It wasn't last night, but it is now. However, I may put something in it, if, as I said, my conscience pricks me more than I can stand. I'm sorry, for, if you'd got the dazzlers they'd have been nice for your best girl. Say, Twistie, she must be a dinky. Well so long; be good to yourself; you're rare. Good luck.—Tim the Tickler."

Winkler swore three times in succession, then threw the letter onto the floor, and paced around the bed until he felt dizzy. Then he sat down on the end of the table until it upset; then he picked the letter up, jammed it into the inner pocket of the lining of his vest beside the other one like it, pulled his cap low, tugged savagely at his vest and went out slamming the door behind him.

He stopped at the office and sent off a "wire," then went out of the hotel by the main entrance. On reaching the beach, he strutted up and down

for an hour; the cool breeze fanning his flushed face and the ocean rolling in and laughing at his feet.

"What do you think of this?" asked Harry, the Clerk, of the pretty girl, with blue eyes and fluffy hair, who had entered by the side door, just as Winkler made his exit by the front, holding out the telegram to her.

The message was directed to the Haynes Agency, Boston and consisted of two words, "Send Jones," signed "T. T. T."

"Harry," the girl said, "what does it mean?" There was a merry twinkle in her eye, and her lips quivered in an attempt to keep back the giggles.

"Come on in," said he, leading the way into the rear office, offering her the chair and himself straddling the corner of the desk, while he looked into her blue eyes. "Say Alice, but that color suits you; you look like a ripe peach."

"Not ready to drop yet," she sallied, "go on, tell me some more."

"I would, if you'd let me," said he, unabashed.

"Silly—I mean about the telegram, what does it mean?"

"Just this, lady gay—he's rounding up the gang and sends for help."

"Oh Harry," Alice was penitent. "I wonder

if he'll get anybody into trouble—perhaps we shouldn't. When it's all over I'll write to him and tell him what we've done."

"No you won't, not on your life; I'll write it and you'll send it. But don't you worry, little girl; they can look after themselves. They're no fools and if he loses his job over it, it jolly well serves him right. The ass—to think of suspecting you. What sort of a character would you have had when he'd done with you?"

"But Harry—he never knew me—and I guess my character could stand the test. It was Mrs. Grimes who suspected me, and I'm afraid of her."

"Yes, and I'd like to smack her well for it."

"You're an impetuous creature," laughed the girl, looking up at him. "I could have cleared myself."

"No sir; they'd have put you under the third degree and God knows how you'd have suffered. Perhaps you wouldn't know what you were saying. I've heard fellows talk and know more than you think about the law, and I tell you it is the most unjust thing going. I wouldn't have you in its clutches, dear girl, not for the world."

"You are entirely too intimate," said Alice.

"Am I?" he grinned, then continued, "I sent the old chap on a blind this afternoon and he and

his friend came back hours apart. The other Alice is in the mix up now, and probably her friend, while old Wink and his pal have cried 'quits'—quarrelled over something, I guess. The letter made him hopping. He came down seeing red."

"That letter," said Alice, and they both laughed till the tears came.

"It provided us with healthy amusement, anyway," said Harry when he sobered up a bit, "and that's the cry to-day—healthy amusement for the young."

"You are clever, Harry," she told him.

"I feel that I have the possibility of greatness within me, if I only had someone to help me show it up," he smiled, but his voice was low and his eyes sought hers.

"I'll be going now," she said, avoiding his gaze. "Can we plan some more tricks to-night?"

"Yes," he said, opening the door for her, "and after that we will have a little talk about something else."

CHAPTER XIV.

Robert Smith felt strongly tempted to turn his back upon Les Quatre Vents forever. He experienced a real disgust for the place and everybody concerned with it, himself included. He abused himself for the space of an hour—the time it took him to walk back to the hotel. His white flannels were dust besmeared about the ankles, and his usually good natured, placid disposition was clogged with sand. Every step he took added to his irritation and vexation of spirit. He called himself a fool, and an ass, and many more names of like character.

His honest soul even wondered for a moment if Alice his beloved was worth it all, then stigmatized himself a cad for the doubt. He must have an interview with her, then he would go back to New York and try to forget. Never before in his life had he been so utterly disgusted with everything in general.

That wretched, blundering idiot of a detective would more than likely annoy her. Winkler was so pig headed, like all fools. If Alice hadn't gone out sight seeing with this new friend, so much trouble would have been avoided. She

was too much in his company anyway. He became indignant, and wondered how she could allow such an intimacy. In attempting to shield her he had turned the eyes of the law full upon her, and now God only knew what she would have to suffer.

He felt in a mood to get even with Winkler. The opportunity to accomplish this lay right ahead, and as much as he disliked the thing, he decided to do it, that by so doing he would cheat the law, which in this case meant Winkler, and that was for the moment his controlling ambition. He had given up all hope of saving the woman by appealing to her better nature. He had tried that, and failed. Now the only thing to be done was to go to her, and "right out from the shoulder" so to speak, ask her to hand over the jewels, promising to save her reputation if she did so, telling her in good plain English that he knew all about her, just what she had done, the kind of life she led, and the story of her down fall. When cornered in such a fashion, if she confessed the truth, he would keep the law from getting her, by anonymously returning the jewels and assisting her to make a safe get away. It was all so simple that he became impatient to get at it.

Once the jewels were returned, the Agency

would withdraw Winkler, probably dismissing him for his stupidity, and then his Alice would have nothing to fear. Surely it was little enough to do for the woman whom he was enduring all this agony for, in order to claim in the end.

After dinner he presented himself fresh and immaculate at Mrs. Guy Forester's, alias Mrs. Alice Bell's door.

She intimated quite plainly that it was not her wish to see him. He expected the repulse and took it bravely. "Mrs. Bell," he said, looking steadily at her, "It will be greatly to your advantage to allow me a talk with you."

"Your insolence both amazes and annoys me," she told him frankly. "Kindly do not bother me further."

"You must see me," he said, holding his ground. "I'm a gentleman, Mrs. Bell, and regret the necessity that compels this apparent rudeness on my part. I assure you on my word of honor you have nothing to fear from me and that the interview will be greatly to your advantage."

The man was so much in earnest, that she felt he had to be reckoned with: "You speak in riddles, Mr. Smith. I cannot place you. Either you are a maniac or a very much mistaken man.

Come in, and we will try to understand each other if such a thing be possible." He thanked her and entered.

The little sitting room was dimly lighted, for she had been reading by the table lamp. Now she turned the switch, and flooded the room with light, then seated herself some distance from him.

He noticed that she wore the necklace, which fact, he felt might be of assistance to him.

It was absolutely impossible and also unnecessary to engage in any pleasant preliminaries. "I came here to-night," he began in a low, serious voice, "on a special errand; and first, let me assure you that I am only actuated by a desire to help you. You are no doubt aware that the situation is serious." This would enlighten her immediately, he thought.

She sat and stared at him incredulous, then suddenly decided to move her chair, without attracting his attention, nearer the bell, and with her eyes measured the distance to it. She decided not to reply, for ever since childhood she had heard that insane people should not be crossed. To argue with him was out of the question, and to agree was impossible. Besides she must not appear alarmed.

She leaned back in her chair after moving it a little (a little at a time would be best) and tried to smile.

"You have nerves of iron," he went on interpreting her silence as acknowledgment. "You are not an ordinary woman and for this reason I have endeavoured to help you; for, believe me. Mrs. Bell I did not seek your acquaintance simply to spy upon you." He paused for a moment but she only moved her chair a little, and kept on smiling. "And before you tell me your story," he continued, feeling sure that there was no more fight left in her, "I want you to fully understand that."

Still she did not speak. Another little move of her chair and she would be within reach of the bell.

In his heart he pitied her, for now he knew just how desperate was her position, and how welcome his offer of help would be. "The detective intended arresting you yesterday morning," he explained and noted with further pity the extreme pallor of her countenance. "Fortunately for you he did not; and now, perhaps he will not have the opportunity if you will agree to accept my help."

Her heart was thumping, but her finger was on the bell, when he stepped over to her and very gently removed her hand. "No, Mrs. Bell. Do not ring for anyone; be brave and face the thing out; I am your best friend."

Was he mad? He did not look like an insane person. "I do not understand," she managed to say, in a shaky voice.

"She is about at the end of her tether," he commented to himself. "The tears are near, poor little woman," he looked pityingly at her.

"Face it out," he repeated, seating himself nearer to her "and trust me. Your confidence will never be betrayed, in fact," he wished to make it easy for her, "I know so much about it all that it is not necessary to tell me anything, simply hand over the jewels."

The situation had outwitted her, she could not reach a conclusion, but the man must be stopped. "Sir," she said, and stood to her feet while her face was white. "You are either a madman or an ass, I don't know in the least what you are talking about. If you are not mad, answer me this, who do you think I am?"

Because he was not mad, and only now began to wonder if he was an ass, he stood to his feet also and answered perplexed and a bit at sea. "You are Miss Alice Bell, late governess to Mrs. Josiah Grimes of Boston and under suspect in this hotel for the theft of a valuable pearl necklace which you are now wearing."

"You are mad," she said, the whole room in a blur before her.

"No," he replied, "I am not; or at least I think I am not."

She was fumbling in the dark, "I am Miss Alice Bell," her lips repeated the words hardly audible, "late governess to Mrs. Josiah Grimes of Boston—" He thought she was about to faint; this was most distressing; what was the explanation?

She swayed slightly, but recovered herself, there was some terrible mistake somewhere. It would be better to understand it. She dropped heavily into the rocker by the table, "Explain, please," she asked him.

Then all of a sudden it dawned upon him that she was innocent. Whoever she was, she was not the thief. "Is your real name not Miss Alice Bell?" He felt like two cents and looked it.

"Neither Miss nor Mrs. Bell," she answered.

"Would you mind telling me just who you are?"

"Mrs. Guy Forester of Philadelphia."

"Is this true?"

"It is."

"Do you know nothing of what I have been speaking?"

"Nothing whatever."

"Could you swear this?"

"I could."

Winkler was an ass; he was an ass, and the situation unspeakable. Smith rose and picked up his hat, "Mrs. Forester, an apology for my conduct would amount to nothing. I should be shot. There has been a frightful mistake, and I feel so mean and despicable that the best I can do is to rid you of my presence immediately, begging your forgiveness."

His conduct had been that of a fool, and he felt like one. He wanted to get away and hide himself, or take the next train out of the country, and never never, as long as he lived, set eyes on *Les Quatre Vents* again.

Lillian Forester recovered her composure, and the blur left her eyes. The man's unmistakable honesty impressed her. She wanted to learn the whole story, besides, her present position, and assumed name, must undoubtedly bewilder him. It was only fair to them both that the mystery be solved.

"Mr. Smith," she said, "I will consider it a favour if you remain and explain the whole thing to me. In a way I feel a bit responsible for it."

"If you wish," was his humble reply. It was only right that he should confess, for his mental conviction was that the old adage, "the devil

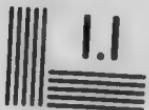


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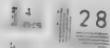
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finds mischief for idle hands," applied well to his case.

Then he told her the whole story, hiding nothing from first to last, except the incident of that afternoon's chase. This he could not mention because of the necessary confidence it would involve regarding Alice, his beloved. Both wisdom and fine feeling forbade it. Everything that he had done had been prompted by the one desire to shield his Alice from the faintest shadow of suspicion. Through his blundering that afternoon he had failed. Winkler now added her to his list of suspects as well as himself. However, the situation must for the time being at least, be left as it was. Even the repetition of her name in connection with the case might fan the all ready spark into life. Perhaps yet he could turn the suspicion into other channels.

As he finished his story, this idea came like a beam of sunshine—it flooded his thought to the exclusion of all else. The part he had played in the case seemed inconsequential compared to the part yet awaiting him.

He finished lamely and sat staring vacantly at the cretonne hangings of the low window before him. He endeavoured to peer into the future as a sailor into the mist, searching for the dim outline of a shore ahead. One thought obsessed

him—he would yet clear the path for Alice and get the better of Winkler at the same time.

Lillian Forester's voice aroused him, she was smiling, "You have not quite finished?" she queried. "This pensive mood argues some further revelation."

"Forgive me; for the moment I confess to absent mindedness, or rather I indulged in a mental journey."

"Arriving?"

"Shall I tell you?"

"I wish you would, the whole thing has naturally been a wonderful, as well as fearful revelation to me; but as you told the story, first the suspicion which naturally pointed to me on account of the synonymous names, your part in it—played through pure curiosity and love of the game—then all my actions bearing you out in the conviction of my guilt, I understand perhaps better than you think how easily and surely I have provided the evidence against myself, by my actions and conduct. I suppose many a one has been condemned on less. Mere circumstantial evidence no doubt, but sufficiently incriminating. Before you tell me anything further I want to thank you, Mr. Smith, for saving me, not through 'reformation of character' as was your very worthy ambition," here she laughed,

"although I confess I am in need of that too, but by warning me, preparing me for Winkler and his forthcoming arrest; for you think he will attempt it do you not?"

"Not now, Mrs. Forester," Robert Smith was again keenly alive to the situation. "We hold the trump card and can play him a good trick I think."

"But how?"

"I omitted mentioning that circumstances had so complicated the case; that just to-day I also have become under suspect; how or why, or as what, I cannot say, but Winkler informed me of the suspicion by telling me that he knew "my number" which means almost anything, I presume."

"He considers you mixed up in this thing, too. How ridiculous!" she said, perfectly amazed, but beginning to see the humour in it.

"Yes, I think he imagines we belong to the same gang. Winkler is a very big man in his own estimation, and his ideas are astounding at times. His brain has the 'circumstantial evidence kink' to such an extent that the slightest noise in a dark corner points to a forthcoming explosion. To him everything is significant; my conduct since attempting to aid the law has evidently puzzled him and this doubt in his

mind has become evidence against me. Then, a little incident which I can't very well relate has further convinced him of my guilt. I should not wonder," and he laughed heartily at the idea, "if Winkler even suspects me of being the 'ring leader' of the whole gang and you, my right hand accomplice. Probably he thinks us old hands at it, and this theft of Mrs. Grimes' jewels merely one offence, not by any means our first, but, if he can manage it, our last."

As he spoke, the situation became filled with humour for Lillian Forester. What a funny trick fate had played on her? The widow's disguise and her friend's name, with which she had thought to escape the "eyes of her husband," had been the means of attracting "the eyes of the law." As a result the real criminal was allowed to escape, and she the innocent one involved to a serious extent, with even a probable arrest on the morrow facing her, which was all bad enough to be sure; but the ridiculous side of it appealed to her just now. She smiled to think that she, Lillian Forester, the petted child of Steven Williams, the Tobacco King, humoured in every extravagance her heart had desired since childhood, and now the wife of Guy Forester, millionaire manufacturer, was under suspect of theft, the petty theft of a pearl necklace. It was

laughable, but in a way she deserved it, she argued, for her conduct had been despicable. The jealousy which had driven her to it, she now felt ashamed of. The passion of revenge and the hate in her heart for the woman seducer, were motives too mean to be excused.

Her conduct ever since that night when she had quarrelled with her husband, and he had left her in anger, viewed now in the light which had come to her appeared as something grotesque and offensive; she hated herself for it. The spider's web into which she now found herself entangled and any further trouble which might result, while endeavouring to extricate herself, was all the outcome of something sinister and ugly which she had harboured within her own heart; namely, that bulging eyed protruding eared monster—jealousy—that mischief maker, and spoiler of homes and happiness.

She decided to remain at Les Quatre Vents no longer. Perhaps Robert Smith, this man who had first spied on her, but who now proved a friend would aid her further by suggesting a plan whereby she could regain her home in safety. Once there her identity could not be questioned and she would be safe.

But by aiding her to escape, Robert Smith might become further involved, unless the facts

of the case were laid open to him, enabling him if necessary to make a clean breast of the matter. It could not be denied that she had registered under an assumed name, and was disguised as a widow. These facts alone cast suspicion upon her. If the charge of theft was proved to be a mistake, to any thinking person her position still courted suspicion.

Her name, Mrs. Forester, evidently revealed nothing to Robert Smith. If the name of Guy Forester was known to him, he did not suspect any connection between the two, and Lillian Forester preferred, both for her own sake and that of her husband, that he should remain in ignorance.

"What are we going to do about it?" she asked, after they had both been thoughtful a moment. "I suppose in order to clear myself before Winkler, to the extent that he will regard me as a perfectly innocent individual, all sorts of credentials would have to be resorted to, not without a degree of publicity—the very thing I am most anxious to avoid."

He looked at her a bit wonderingly.

"You have been most charitable, Mr. Smith," she continued, toying with the pearls at her neck, and looking away from him, "for my conduct—assumed name and other things, must have puzzled you."

"To be candid, they have," he confessed.

"Then let me in turn clear myself, and the confession will do my own soul good. After that we can decide the fate of Winkler. I quarreled with my husband," she began, not wishing to spare herself, "over what seemed to me then a most important matter. First let me tell you that since childhood I have been given everything my heart desired and consequently grew up to be a selfish woman, considering only my own happiness, understanding fully the pleasure of receiving, but knowing nothing of the happiness of giving. My husband hurt me terribly Mr. Smith, and it was the first hurt I had ever suffered. I vowed vengeance; I wanted to cause him more suffering if possible than he had inflicted upon me. Jealousy was at the root of the whole thing; I was jealous of my husband; I did not want his smiles to be given to anyone but me; I wanted him to make a little heaven of our home, with myself as the only star. I did nothing much for him except, accept his gifts and himself as my due, giving little in return, and he did not exact it. He never questioned my actions; I was free. One day I questioned his and believed then, and do now, that his affections were given to another. He was no longer mine, and my little world collapsed. I

wanted to hit him, to hurt him, for daring to rob me of my happiness. Through it all my concern was for myself alone—childish, was it not, Mr. Smith? I came down here disguised to watch him make love to the other woman; they are here together, and I wished to humiliate him before her and before the whole world. It was a mean desire, and even if I have the misfortune to be arrested by Winkler the result will be worth it all for I am a different woman. I have grown up, and now there is neither revenge or hate in my heart for either of them. I want to go home." Her voice was a bit shaky, "and try to get a different grip on life. To begin all over again, to reconstruct and perhaps build something worth while."

"But your husband?" he managed to ask in the midst of all this amazing revelation.

"He will have to shoulder the whole responsibility. It rests with him entirely. I find it hard to think of him; let us not speak any more of it." Then, in a moment, "I have explained the situation, Mr. Smith," she ended, again smiling.

"Thank you," he replied, "I assure you your story is safe with me Mrs. Forester, and I do wish to tell you that I both understand the whole circumstance—I am a widower—and ad-

mire you very much; your present condition of mind is the only noble one. I, too, realize what a yellow thing jealousy is, only perhaps in a little different way. At one time I discovered myself in just such a position as your husband now finds himself."

"You loved a woman, other than your wife, Mr. Smith?"

"No, I did not, but jealousy in the heart of another charged me with such an offence."

"Ah, you are innocent, no doubt, but this is a different thing. I have seen my husband every day with her, here, for the past few weeks. What is the answer to that, Mr. Smith?"

"It looks bad," he had to confess, smiling, "but circumstantial evidence might explain it; you know how it incriminates—it might also acquit."

She laughed, bitterly, he thought, "It might," she agreed, "but the woman is beautiful."

"External beauty, only," he commented, "something will show her up to his disgust. It always does, you know."

"But I do not want him back," she told him, "she is welcome to him."

Then she quickly changed the subject, "Now, for Winkler, Mr. Smith. What will we do to him, and how will we outwit him and escape? I presume you, too, are anxious to quit the place."

"I must remain," he answered, seriously, "I cannot leave for a while yet; but that is just it —what is to be done to Winkler? How can we outwit him, lead him off the trial, so to speak? To leave immediately, Mrs. Forester would, I fear, only rush disagreeable developments. Your journey home, providing you are allowed to board the train, might be made uncomfortable. Winkler, you know, is a queer fellow. His conscience is the 'conscience of the law.' 'All suspects' are 'criminals' in his eyes, and his eyes are the 'eyes of the law.' Just now he has this 'gang' idea in his mind and you are safe for a few days at least. If you are willing to remain, and give me the night to think matters over, perhaps by to-morrow a way out will be revealed. What do you say?"

"There seems nothing else for it, Mr. Smith. I am willing to do as you request; another day or two will make little difference and, as you say, we may think of a way out."

The matter had to rest there.

As the hour was early, Robert Smith decided to take a stroll along the beach before retiring. Perhaps some kind of inspiration would come to him.

CHAPTER XV.

Tim the Tickler's note had stated that "the box would be under the first seat to the west of the lookout path after nine o'clock that evening." This piece of information kept repeating itself to Winkler all through the hours that intervened, until at last he could idly listen no longer, he must do something.

Shortly after dinner he called Joey, one of the little bell boys, to him. He was a happy-faced fellow always whistling and ready for anything.

"Here, Joey," said Winkler, with all the importance a well filled out vest, wide gold chain, and diamond tie ring could give him, as well as an air of mystery and dark things, supplied by the black silk peaked cap drawn well down over a pair of sharp black eyes, and a shrewd whisper in an empty hall. "I want you to do something for me; you're off at seven aren't you?"

"Yes sir."

"Well, give me the next two hours—from seven to nine, say nine thirty—and I'll give you as much as you make here in a week. What do you say, little man?"

"All right, sir," Joey grinned from ear to ear. Such a chance didn't come every day.

"Now, listen," said Winkler, "this job is between you and me; remember I'll know if you mention it; I have ways of knowin' and it won't be well for you. When I leave, you can talk if you like but keep your mouth shut till then—get me?"

"Yes sir," supplied Joey, the smile fading, but his eyes keen and bright "I'm ready."

"Now, it's all very simple," said Winkler, "all you've got to do is to keep your eyes open and tell me exactly what I ask you to. If you hang round the spot I mention, never letting it out of your sight for good two hours or more, that's all that's required of you. Now, Joey the place is the first seat to the west of the lookout path. Know it?"

"The seat under the lilac tree, sir?"

"Yes, I guess so. It's the one just there; the next is about ten feet away on the other side of the lookout. Now a man will place a box under it, likely sometime between now and nine or nine thirty. You are to watch him; take him all in, and tell me just what he looks like—his face, his clothes, height, know him just as well as you would your brother when you are through him. Then follow him, a little behind, so that he

won't notice and tell me where he goes. Don't follow him too close or if you think he suspects you come back. I'll learn enough if you do exactly as I say."

"Will he have a gun, sir?" the situation might become dime-novelish, and Joey was already surmising all sorts of thrillers.

Winkler laughed, "You're not scarey, boy, are you? You're safe enough—only do not let him see you lookin', that's all?"

"I like it," said the small Sherlock, "say are you a detective?" his bright eyes looked into Winkler's, slyly.

"Hush," said the law, smiling and patting the little fellow kindly. "None of your business—see? If I'm not in the rotunda when you return, I'll be in my room over there."

Then he pressed something into the boy's hand, "silence money," he whispered, grinning broadly. "The other half when you report." Joey grinned, too, up into his hero's face.

"I'm your man, sir," he whispered back. "Between us we'll nail him."

It was like the movies, the man they were after, the "villain," he, Joey, had been "let into the game," and the "boss" a real detective.

An hour later saw Joey sauntering manfully along the lookout path, apparently taking little

notice of the first seat to the west as he went, but in his rambles here and there, to and fro, never wandering where the corner of his eye was not turned upon it.

The first hour seemed "all night" to Joey, and nothing occurred. Several people at different times became seated there for a few minutes, but moved away without ever dropping a box under it, and no "lone man" had anything to do with it.

Joey began to wonder if his hero would demand the "silence money" back if the villain came not, but he bravely waited on, chancing the result, and loitering here and there, but hanging around as he was told near the scene of expected action. He took in everyone who approached, so well that he could have written a page of minute description. "Law," he commented to himself, "if this is what being a detective means, me for a merrier life."

The second hour dragged even slower than the first, and Joey was just in the act of "pitching it" when the long looked for villain arrived.

He was tall, clean-shaven, dark, and wore a suit of white flannels. As he approached the seat he seemed quite unconscious of it, as with head thrown up, he surveyed some aspect of the sky above him, until suddenly coming to a halt at the side of it, his cane, which had been revolv-

ing in the air quite jauntily, found a support in the sod, and in doing so struck harsh.

The villain at once transferred his gaze to the earth beneath him, and discovering the point of his cane, searched for the obstruction. He bent down, and looked under the seat, and brought out the obstacle of resistance—an iron box, somewhat rusty and caked with mud. The lock being loose, he lifted up the cover, turned the thing upside down and shook it—the box was empty.

Suddenly a wonderful smile lit up the face of the villain, and clasping the box tightly by the handle, which was squeaky and stiff, he sauntered off quite merrily down the promenade, and into the hotel by the side entrance, all before little Joey could quite recover from his astonishment.

"He didn't have it in his hand, when he came," he told himself, excitedly. "He picked it up, and it must have been there all the time."

So saying he ran straight into Winkler, who had evidently been nosing about. "Did you see him, sir?" he stammered, "he didn't put it down, he picked it up—and ran off with it into the hotel."

"Yes," said that gentleman, very much out of sorts, "I saw him—here's the rest," shoving the

money into the boy's hand, "now, be off, and keep your mouth shut—get me?"

The next morning Robert Smith sought Mrs. Forester shortly before lunch time. He had used the hours of the night to good advantage, and now had ready a scheme, mad and rollicking, to be sure, but one which greatly appealed to him, and which he was eager to unfold to her.

"This box," he said, "started the motor going, and once the wheels of my brain began turning I had no further trouble. It was a clear sail then. You see," he went on, as she listened eagerly, "Winkler is a blow, a brag, a fool. His mind grips at a clue like a bull dog with a stick, and he will not let go until he's made to. He would not listen to us, no matter what the proof of our innocence. His job is hunting down the hunted and he prides himself that he 'gets them' every time. Our trick is to lead him a chase, or rather turn him onto another trail, give him something big to think about, so that he will forget us in the light of the greater attraction, and when he takes his eyes off us, you can skip."

"I see," she replied, beginning to understand a little of what the playing of such a trick might mean, and slowly coming to the determination to cast care to the winds, if he asked her, and for a few days at least, forget everything but the

funny joke they were to play upon this fool egotist, Winkler.

"Are you willing to play the game with me?" he asked, thoughtfully, surmising what it might mean to her.

"Yes," she answered, just as seriously. "Even though I meet my husband, it is as well that he should become aware of my presence here. He can form his opinion of it just as I did of him. At least it will give him something new to think of will it not?" He could not understand this woman who one day, admitted all anger, revenge and hatred gone, and the next cast a doubt upon it. It was one of those inconsistencies usually attributed to woman, he concluded, but had to admit that the fight against inherited tendencies and habit of thought and life through a score of years, was no easy fight.

"We will be seen together," she said.

"Which means that you desert this seclusion of yours."

"Yes," she assented, "I know it, but I'll do it. What is the game?"

"First," said he, "I want to tell you about Winkler's worst enemy, Tim the Tickler. He was a criminal who fooled the police for years, committing all sorts of robberies right under the nose of the law, and got away with it every time.

Winkler lay awake nights worrying about it, and would have given the half of his kingdom to catch him, but this elusive fellow dodged him, and Winkler is sore. Nothing has been heard of him for ten or fifteen years. Probably the fellow is living a decent life somewhere, and raising a family, or perhaps dead. No one knew who or what he was; he remained a mystery. Now my plan is to bring him back for a few days and rattle Winkler. Send the detective off on his trail and thus give you an opportunity to escape."

"It appeals to me," she acknowledged, greatly enthused. "How can we do it?"

He picked up the iron box which he had brought with him. It was cleaned and dusted outside and in. "This box gave me the idea," he said. "In the afternoon, if you are willing, we will carry it between us, you know," and he laughingly demonstrated an attempt to hide a box between two people, "through the rotunda, right before the eyes of Winkler who will be sitting in his favourite chair near the main entrance; hail a taxi in a stealthy, secret fashion, and drive away to a wood I know of, and bury the box."

"What will we put in it?" she inquired, all interest.

"Nothing but a note, in which we inform Winkler that he is on the wrong track, that neither you or I know anything about Mrs. Grimes' necklace, that he is wasting time, and to get after the real thief. We don't belong to a gang; are decent law abiding citizens; and if he is wise and wants to keep his job to change his tactics. Tell him we are leading him this chase because he is such a fool that he wouldn't listen to us in any other way; that you never heard of Mrs. Josiah Grimes until I told you of her; that you are entirely innocent and just because your name happens to be the same as that of the criminal is no proof at all against you; and a few other things I have to say on my own account."

"Your contempt for Winkler is more than evident," she commented, smiling.

"It is, but I was a fool, too, or I would have suggested further investigation before condemning you on such evidence."

"He would not have listened; the law is always so cock sure of itself."

"You are about right, and God help the victim." Then, he continued, "I will leave a note at the office for Winkler, presumably from Tim the Tickler informing him of the whereabouts of a gang, lead him off on a wild goose chase, thereby giving you the opportunity to escape. What do you think of it?"

"It sounds feasible; if he will follow the trail we point out."

"He will; no mistake there. Winkler fairly bubbles over with curiosity and a note from Tim the Tickler will start his blood tingling. He simply couldn't keep from investigating it whether he believed it or not. Even though he thinks it a hoax, he will have some theory about it; it will be significant of something, no doubt about that. Then, even though he still believes you guilty, when he finds the "bird flown," he will be compelled to leave. As Mrs. Forester of Philadelphia you can have nothing to do with the case, and Winkler will have to acknowledge defeat."

"I am anxious to begin the performance. What time will the curtain go up?"

"At four, and have your sense of humour uppermost. Remember, Mrs. Forester, we are simply playing a game. Let us play it well."

Winkler watched the guests stream into the hotel from the early morning express. He stood a few feet away from the main entrance, appearing to be fully engrossed in the advertisement column of the newspaper, but from under the peak of his black silk cap, a pair of sharp eyes scanned the faces of the newly arrived.

A sandy, blue-eyed man, left the crowd and stepped over to him.

Winkler continued reading, then on looking up as though by accident, noticed the stranger. "You, Jones," he grunted folding the paper slowly. Jones was the latest addition to the Haynes Agency. He simply nodded. Winkler threw into prominence his most prominent portion, tugged his vest, and slipped his right thumb into the arm hole of his vest. Then, while thrusting his right hand deep into his trouser pocket, scowled, and said, "Come with me." Jones followed him out of the hotel by the side door.

What he said to Jones, was said in snatches, as they walked along a deserted path leading down to the beach.

In conclusion his directions were brief. "Your's is the guy I'll point out at lunch. We'll wait till he's seated and take the next table. He's not the ringleader, but he's one of the gang. The woman will likely be with him; keep her in sight too. Dog them well; but keep your distance and report to me to-night."

At ten minutes to four, Robert Smith clad in imr aculate white flannels, and soft felt hat, made his way leisurely through the rotunda of the hotel, enquired for his mail, then slowly mounted the stairs to the next floor.

Winkler had just seated himself in his favourite chair near the door, and failed to notice the

passing of Smith. He settled himself back comfortably, crossed his legs, tugged his cap low and prepared to spend a while mentally patching up evidence, and deciding upon his next move, when before his half-closed eyes, somewhat awkwardly and altogether too hurriedly, ambled his late "aid to the law," and the "thief" herself minus widow's veil, and very nervous and ill at ease.

While attempting a natural manner, between them they held something which they distinctly sought to hide. They kept continually casting furtive glances, on all sides, always avoiding Winkler, and apparently unconscious of his presence.

Winkler felt his backbone stiffen, and all the blood in his veins seemed suddenly to flow upward to the roots of his hair.

Within a few feet of the side entrance, the thing they were attempting to hide fell with a crash to the floor. It was a small iron box, and recovering it quickly the late "aid to the law," followed by the "thief" flung themselves through the revolving doors and disappeared from view.

Winkler, who was at their heels immediately, saw them enter a waiting taxi, and fly full speed down the drive.

In a few seconds he was after them, his car

curving in and out, as the car ahead changed from one road to another, even backing up at one time to speed off in another direction entirely.

"There's something on foot," said Winkler to himself between jerky instructions to the driver. "They're cornered and they know it; they're desperate." Still on its mad way sped the auto ahead. Heedless of traffic laws, heedless of hill and dale, like a thing demented; while the late "aid to the law," and the "thief" beside him, sank back into the cushions and held fast, convulsed with laughter—gay, care-free, spontaneous laughter, such as each had indulged in years ago, when life seemed made for it.

Suddenly, slowing up considerably the head car turned down a little used trail, into a pine grove.

Winkler followed stealthily.

Halting some little distance from the grove he alighted, and after instructing the driver, made his way carefully across the meadow to the woods. Gaining it, he tread softly in the direction of whispered voices not far distant. Crouching low within sight and sound of the criminals, he watched and listened.

The man in immaculate white flannels endeavoured nervously to cut the tough green sod, with

the edge of his spade, while the thief knelt low on the grass beside him, holding firmly in her clasp the iron box.

"The same, by Jove, that was buried under the pine tree," Winkler informed himself although he had suspected it before.

This accomplished, the man threw the earth up in great shovelfuls, stopping now and then to listen to the wind in the trees, and to scan the hollows in the green around him. Not a word was exchanged between them; the woman kept guard constantly, nervously watching and listening, evidently fearful of prying eyes.

When the excavation was sufficiently deep, they laid the box carefully within, and proceeded just as hurriedly to shovel the earth back, piling it high, then stamping hard upon it until the surface was even, and the sod laid carefully again in place. Then, taking to their heels they ran into the woods, and disappeared from view.

Still crouching low, Winkler listened and waited until the buzz of their retreating motor was heard no more, and stillness reigned in the pine grove. Then, stealthily, he made his way between the trees to the spot just deserted, and lifting the sod, carefully laid it on the grass to the side, while with his pocket spade he began digging out the earth. The excavation was

somewhat deep and the undertaking bound to be slow.

Patiently he kept to the task, tugging at his vest between times as the continual stooping caused it to creep up, and now and then feeling for his diamond tie ring to assure himself of its safety.

Finally, unearthing the box, he pulled it up, and laid it before him. The cover being loose he lifted it and peered in, and grabbing the note tore it open and read: "Sit down, Winkler, when you get this and take a rest. Consider what a fool you are; I guess you're pretty tired by now; digging is hard work, and the rest will do you good; besides, the change of thought should act as a mental stimulant. By the way, how do you like digging? (when Winkler came to this he cast the note from him in disgust; he stood and pulled at his waxed moustache in pure vexation of spirit; then somewhat desperately reclaiming the letter read on) If you were not such a fool, we wouldn't have to lead you this merry chase in order to get you to listen to us. You are what I'd call pig-headed." Winkler shook the paper and fumed, "if your brain hadn't that 'circumstantial evidence kink,' you'd have known long ago that you were on the wrong track. Why man, the woman is as in-

nocent as your grandmother's cat; she never even heard of Mrs. Josiah Grimes or her miserable necklace until I had the effrontery to tell her. There are other widows besides disguised ones, and because the names are the same, is no evidence against her. Listen to this—suppose you were John Smith of Buffalo, would that be proof that you were John Smith of Arizona, you dupe. Hit your head with the spade until you knock some sense into it. Get after the real Alice Bell and leave this woman alone. If you want to keep your job, heed what I say. You are making a fool of yourself, as well as of the whole Haynes Agency, and it won't be well for you if this gets to headquarters. I mean to give you a chance to clear out, and if you don't you will jolly soon wish you had" Robert Smith.

Winkler threw the note on the grass and jumped on it. He wanted to throw the box too. Instead, he stood still and considered.

"The man had nerve; the daring of the thing was appalling—who was he? Such insolence to be directed against the servant of the law was preposterous." Winkler shook his vest in anger, and puffed and fumed, and clicked his right thumb.

Finally, calming himself under protest, he picked up the note, folded it and placed it care-

fully in the inside pocket of the lining of his vest, along with other important and incriminating documents in connection with the Grimes' case. He lifted the box, examined it, and threw it aside giving it a kick with his boot. Then, standing over it, he suddenly kicked it back into the hole, and began filling in the earth. This he did very reluctantly and in evident bad humour. Every minute he puffed and fumed and muttered something cruel.

The task accomplished, he turned about and, with cap pulled low, set out to make his way through the woods to the waiting motor. His thoughts were unkind and he swore under his breath.

CHAPTER XVI.

Meanwhile Robert Smith and Mrs. Forester, the chase over, had returned to the hotel. They alighted at the side door and before going in Smith suggested a walk on the beach to talk things over.

"I am sure to meet my husband," she told him somewhat nervously, "though it might prove to be a help if I did; perhaps he should know I am here. Waiting becomes monotonous, especially after one has waited so long alone as I have," she added wistfully.

"It might bring him to his senses," suggested Smith. "The venture is not great at any rate."

"I'll try it," she said.

Half way down the winding path leading to the beach, and just where the space between the trees became narrowed by the thickly growing pines, only a few paces from them, a man and woman climbed to meet them. The woman was his beloved Alice, and the man her faithful companion.

Robert felt the blood rush to his head. How would she interpret the presence of the woman with him? He had not thought of that. Surely

she would not think he had resorted to a chance acquaintance.

They met and she smiled, was it lonesomely, at him? At any rate the smile impressed him as something pathetic. Did she pity him? That would be unbearable. What new complication had entered into this most miserable of summer holidays? His mind was obsessed with these thoughts when the voice of his companion surprised him.

"Did you see that man?" she asked in a limp voice.

He looked at her inquiringly.

"He is my husband."

Robert Smith felt weak.

"You know the lady?" she questioned.

"I do," he replied looking her square in the eyes.

"He almost staggered when he saw me," she went on—then suddenly, "Who is she?"

"The woman I intend to marry," he said in a firm voice.

"But my husband loves her," her voice was almost a sneer. "You will fight for her as they did in old times? My husband came here to be with her. Mr. Smith, she is the woman who has stolen his love from me and you love her." She laughed shrilly at this, "Love is an easy thing with her—"

"Stop," said Robert Smith, indignantly, "I am sorry for you, but I cannot listen to any more. There is some mistake, some terrible mistake. Let us go back to the hotel, and think about it."

"Very well," she answered coldly, "there is much to think about."

"They walked back in silence taking another path up the hill. Somehow the gay, care-free laughter, of their joy-ride an hour before, seemed to rise up and mock them. It had not taken long for the sky to cloud again.

Guy Forester and his companion, Alice Bell Wright, climbed on up the hill. She a little ahead and somewhat weary, while his legs seemed suddenly to have gone back on him, and he felt as though he had just recovered from a severe illness. On turning around she became startled at his appearance. Waiting for him she took his arm, "What is the matter; what has happened? You look sick—tell me."

"That man you bowed to," he told her, in a strained voice, "Did you notice the woman with him?"

She nodded.

"She is my wife," he said, "and I did not know she was here; it gave me a shock."

"Guy Forester," she exclaimed, "I have

known all along that you were in trouble, and because of your loyalty to her you would not tell me. Come over here to this seat and tell me all about it. Have I not known you for years and have I not the right to help you?"

"There is no help for it," he said, "I had just made up my mind to go home, and begin all over again, when I find her here with another man. Alice, it has taken the heart out of me. Ever since coming here the thing has been on my mind, night and day. I cannot shake it. My darn pride has kept me from going back and just as I had broken that down, this revelation."

"I can't have yo . . . on like that," she said, "unless you tell me the whole story from first to last; what started the rumpus, and all the evidence for and against you both."

Then he told her everything, glad to share the burden with someone, for it had eaten into his heart well nigh to his own undoing.

When he had finished, Alice summed up the evidence, "and you think that she refused your offer of a holiday just to get you away in order to meet this man here; that she had it up her sleeve, so to speak, all the time?"

"I think so; it all came to me like a revelation when I saw them together just now."

"And Guy Forester," she said, standing up be-

fore him, "what will your wife think of you and me? She charged you with caring for another woman, and told you to spend your holiday with her? Will she not think me that other woman?"

"By Jove, Alice, you are right; more than likely she will."

"I have my own troubles, too," she tried to smile though the tears were near. "The man in white flannels whom your wife came here to be with is the man I am engaged to marry."

"Alice," he exclaimed, "God bless us all! What a mix up!"

"It is true, and just by way of returning the compliment I am going to tell you my story; how I came to be here and the agreement we entered upon."

"Do," he replied. "Perhaps it will help us to see daylight."

She told it well, and in concluding said, "I know now why he fell in so readily with my suggestion. It is a touchy thing for a man to tell the woman who loves him, that he no longer cares for her. It is less embarrassing just to show her like this. He does not need to fear, I understand. A woman does not have to be told that twice; once is sufficient. Oh! I am disgusted with everything," her cheeks were burning. "Come, let us go back to the hotel and pack up, I am going home to-morrow."

"Alice," Guy Forester had turned suddenly at catching the sound of a stir in the leaves near, "have you noticed a man following us all afternoon? I have caught sight of him every little while—a sandy, blue-eyed man, with hat pulled well down over his eyes. I know him, recognized him at once as Jones of the Haynes Detective Agency, Boston. On my trip to that City last month, the man was one of the detectives on the Hamilton case, perhaps you read of it—I was interested in it—as the man suspected of the theft used to be in my employ and I went down to try and do something for him."

"But why should he follow you?" she questioned in amazement.

"Come on up," he beckoned moving away. Then when she was alongside, "More than likely Lillian, wishing to get a divorce, has employed him to watch me.

"What a sneakish thing," she retorted, angrily.

"Never you mind; he's easily settled. I will take a long walk to-night and if the man continues to follow me, I will send a message to the Haynes Detective Agency that will make them shudder."

"What a dreadful thing to employ a detective to watch one's husband," she said.

"You don't know Lillian; she is equal to anything."

Guy Forester had so encouraged his evil thoughts, and suspicion during these lonely days that he had come to this. How quickly the weeds grow. Looking over his shoulder he again caught sight of the sandy, blue-eyed man following far off. "There he is," said he, as they hurried on.

"I see him," she replied, as together they entered the hotel.

On his return, Winkler was handed a note from the office. It had been left there, stated Harry, the Clerk, scarcely controlling a grin, "not half an hour ago."

Winkler took it and looked at it. "Who left it?" he lifted his eyebrows and eyed the clerk closely.

"Same big chap sir—white flannels, tall and dark."

"A guest at the hotel?" the detective ventured.

"Can't say, Mr. Timmins," was the laconic reply.

Winkler edged up nearer and half leaning over said in a low voice, accompanied by a wink of the right eye, "Help a fellow out, won't you?" "Nothing doing," said Harry Lawrence as he turned on his heel and entered the rear office. Winkler scowled, muttered something under his breath and walked away. He shoved the letter

deep into his coat pocket and held it there, then went over to the elevator. When in his own room he took the letter out and sneeringly surveyed the address.

"Same old scribble," he snarled; "for two cents I'd quit the whole rotten business."

For the first time in his life Winkler was tired of the game. "Who stole the pearls? Who is Alice Bell? Who writes the notes? Who is Tim the Tickler? Id' like to send the whole gang, pearls and notes, to blazes—the very devil's in it."

He sat down on the chair by the table and drummed his fists on its glass surface. "Ugh!" he grunted, and threw the letter from him into the far corner of the room. Then he got up and paced the floor in a high fury, tugging now and then savagely at his waxed moustache and shaking the wrinkles out of his trousers, while his checkered vest became very prominent, and his gold watch chain rattled with his hasty revolutions. After his fury had half spent itself he stamped over to the letter addressed in the school girlish hand writing, then savagely cut it open and read."

"Dear old pal, you'll be glad to hear that I'm around again when you read the news I have for you. But didn't I give you a jolly scare in

the old days, Winkler. Many's the time I made your hair stand on end; but a married man has to reform sometime, especially when he's a kid like mine. Now I can take a holiday when and where I like without being hounded; it's worth the sacrifice. The money's what I regret. Say, but didn't I make a few good hauls, but I got a job now that would open your eyes. Never mind, you don't know me and never will, but here's what I got to say. I know the inside of a lot you only guess at and I see with my eyes things that would make you turn white. I know you're after something, sure as guns, Winkler you wouldn't be taking a holiday at Les Quatre Vents for nothing. Now, I know why. There's a gang around here planning a 'big one'—that's for me to know, and you to find out, get me? Well all I'll do to help you is, tell you where they 'hang out,' you can do your own investigating. Just by mere chance I ran across it. They are crooks of the worst kind, but if any man can tell a gang's headquarters it's me—you acknowledge that Winkler. I'm the slippery kid. Well, this gang 'hangs out'—now listen—one mile to the north on the Rainbow Road, then turn West half a mile. Now you're at a wood lyin' on this side of the station. They have a little shanty there and it all looks quite natural. My

advice is, go at night, early I mean, and you'll not find them asleep. And if you don't make the biggest haul of your law-abiding life, my name is not, "Tim the Tickler."

Winkler let the letter fall out of his hands, and he stood there too quiet to be natural. Hope again tugged at his heart. Would his luck turn? He walked slowly over to the big chair in the corner of the room and huddled himself in it. His neck sank down between his fat shoulders, while he crossed his legs and folded his arms to think.

CHAPTER XVII.

After Guy Forester returned from his long walk that night, he sent the following message to the Haynes Detective Agency, Boston:

"Will sue agency if Jones is not recalled immediately no matter who is responsible for his orders."

Guy Forester.

The man had continued to hound him all evening, and the only explanation was that Lillian his wife, eager to gather evidence against him, had employed someone to follow him. Guy Forester knew that the Agency was quite well aware of who he was, and more than that, they dare not disobey his instructions.

Then he went to his room, but not to sleep. He tossed about in a turmoil of emotion, swayed one moment by this passion and the next by that, until his nervous system became almost exhausted. The little suspicions of Lillian that had dyed his thoughts since the night of the quarrel, and his sudden leave taking, now assumed form and confronted him as realities.

To his mind the evidence of her guilt was all

too sure. She had not winced at meeting him, but turned her head away as his eyes sought hers, as though she did not care. She had got past caring, he supposed. He wondered where she had been and what she had been doing since his departure, and conceived an answer which fitted well his present state of mind. It did not seem to surprise him that he was so ready to believe her guilty. She, whose life, even though self centered to a fault, had been wholly above reproach in matters pertaining to morals. He argued that it was injury added to injury; offence added to offence that had prepared his mind for this climax, and he did not stop to think how illogical his argument was, or to search for proof beyond the face value of her guilt. Again circumstantial evidence played its part, swaying his judgment and prejudicing his mind. Figuratively speaking, it "closed his right eye, and half closed his left." Then, as the still small hours of the night crept on, he fell into a restless sleep and dreamed. He was again home and Lillian his wife, fairer and lovelier than ever, was by his side. Her hand was in his, and her eyes upturned to him, while her lips told him that she loved him, had never loved another, and that together they would turn their faces to the sunlight and begin again. He wakened with

a start, just as the rising sun threw her beams across his bed, and still under the spell of the dream, he prayed silently that it might be so.

While Alice Bell Wright, beloved fiancee of Robert Smith, sat by her window looking out into the starry night long after the lights were low and the guests all slumbered. Sometimes a tear ran down her cheek to the cold window sill, and a smothered sob left her heart to mingle with the midnight breeze. She could see it all plainly now. He had said that he had a little scheme of his own, and this was it; but what a cruel scheme. "I will go home to-morrow," she told herself sadly, "and he will never see me again. Of course Guy will allow his wife a divorce. I must make sure of that, for didn't I pledge myself to think of his happiness alone, and I must be game." Had they not both promised to play the game to the finish, what ever that finish be, bitter or sweet; and it was bitter—she never knew till now how much she loved him.

Now that he did not care for her, had shown her so clearly that he did not and would marry the other woman, she would never let him know how much he had made her suffer. She could be game to that extent, and if the morning ever came, she would talk to Guy and persuade him to give his wife a divorce, because it meant

Robert's happiness, and she must fight for that. She knew that her love was not jealous and selfish and thought that she desired only the happiness of him she loved best.

Her fevered senses gave her no rest, and when morning dawned, it found her broken-hearted, but keyed up to play the game to the finish, as she understood it.

When Winkler returned to the hotel in the small hours of the morning, he mounted the stairs with head bent and step slow. He had been out on another wild goose chase.

The cabin was there, sure enough, but empty. A little note was tacked to the door written in the same school girlish scrawl he had always hated, and now loathed with an unspeakable loathing, and on it was scribbled the words, "The right spot, Wink, but the birds have flown."

Winkler's vest no longer appeared prominent, it had caved in. His trousers seemed loose and baggy in places, and his peaked cap was very low and slightly crooked. He had to help himself up by the banister, as all the life had gone out of him.

He had torn that little note up into a thousand pieces, and wished only that he could tear it into a thousand more. Then huddling down into the cushions of the waiting motor had sped home again, beaten.

In the morning after Lillian Forester had thought about "it" all night, she met Robert Smith in the rotunda. She could not greet him with a smile, for there was nothing to smile about. Life was a serious thing, and just now the outlook dark and misty. Through the night her duty had been made clear to her. Was all this better nature she had so recently discovered to mean nothing? The test had come soon, was she to flunk, to show the white feather when that better nature demanded something noble of her? She had learned a new bravery these last few weeks at Les Quatre Vents, when she had placed the inmost thoughts and ambitions of her heart in the witness stand, and pronounced judgment upon herself.

The time had come for this new bravery to assert itself. Her duty, as she saw it, was to grant Guy a divorce. Why should she wish to hold him when it was his desire to go? Was love only selfish? Was the other's happiness nothing? She had been selfish all her life, thinking only of her own happiness and now she must be brave and make this act of hers the turning point in her life. His happiness should be first with her now. In granting him his freedom she would show him that. It would be better to write him a note the next day, informing him

that he had nothing to fear, that his happiness meant more to her than her own. Her heart would suffer; for she loved him, only realizing now how great that love was; but a vision of unselfish service had come to her, and she bowed her head before it.

"You certainly made use of the night," Robert Smith told her, noting the sadness of her countenance. "Why make such a tragedy out of it?"

"Surely you can see nothing else in it?"

"To be sure, it looks dark," he replied. "But let us go out in the sunlight and perhaps the world will look brighter; the days can not all be dark, I feel confident of that; the clouds will roll back sometime."

"I know the facts too well in my case to humour even your slight optimism," she replied wearily, and as he looked into her sad eyes, he felt sorry for her. "The only encouraging thing about it, is the determination I have come to, or I should say my better self has come to, to play the game unselfishly. Love is not love at all unless it is unselfish. This is part of a creed I have learned through suffering, and it must be right. It is the only light that has come to me, and I am going to follow it."

"You mean by that?"

"To allow my husband a divorce. He loves

another woman, and I will put no object in his way."

Robert Smith hung his head. He had promised to play the game too, if it came to that. "Bitter or sweet," he had said, and it had come to this,—or had it? Circumstantial evidence had so become a part of his mental deduction; could there be some mistake? The case seemed clear enough, but had not circumstantial evidence proved amiss in the case of Mrs. Grimes' jewels. Might it not be that now it was at fault again?"

He spoke to her of this, but she only shook her head, "There is no chance of that this time," she answered. "I will write to my husband and tell him that he has not ~~ing~~ to fear from me; then I am going home to- ght." They both forgot Winkler and his game, in the absorbing "old game," they were in honour bound to play fair.

In that morning's mail Winkler received a very remarkable letter. As he read it, all the little devils all over the world seemed to be laughing at him, and calling him names. The names were not pleasant to hear, but for the first time in his life, Winkler really believed he deserved them, so much so, that he finally joined in the ugly chorus.

The letter was from no less a personage than

Mrs. Josiah Grimes herself, and stated in the best English her command that, "having discovered a piece of information she knew would be interesting to him, and seeing that he was the one she had employed to search for her pearls, and remembering Josiah's injunction to waste no time in going around the bush, decided to write straight to him instead of to the Agency, telling him the news, the wonderful news—that her precious necklace was found; in fact, had never been lost or stolen at all. Moses, her boy, "who is clever and sharp like his father, played a trick on me, and hid it as all children will, Mr. Timmins so don't blame Moses, and would you believe it for a boy so young, has kept them hid all this time, only telling me about it this day." Of course, being honest, Moses would have owned up and cleared the thief if they had caught her, but seein' that they hadn't, "it's all right, isn't it, Mr. Timmins?"

Winkler was sick; his thoughts turned to drink. He wanted to go away alone and get drunk, and forget it.

Soul sick, he stumbled passed the office on his way outside, for fresh air, when Harry, the Clerk, beckoned him.

"Message Sir."

Winkler's hand shook as he took it. It was

from his chief, and he knew the end had come.
It was brief.

"You and Jones will report in the morning."

He crumpled the yellow slip, and put it in his pocket, then turned and walked away.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Alice Bell, late governess to Mrs. Josiah Grimes, recently under suspect of the theft of Mrs. Grimes' pearl necklace, but now proved innocent by the finding of same jewels, all unconscious of the acquittal, and of Winkler's orders to report at headquarters, strolled leisurely up and down the sea beach, awaiting although she wou'd not have confessed it, the return home of Harry K. Lawrence, head clerk at Les Quatre Vents.

The hour was six thirty, the end of his industrial day, and the strollers on the beach had concerned themselves of the approaching dinner hour, and forthwith had taken themselves off.

Only a few little groups remained, and these widely scattered.

On perceiving Harry's approach, she feigned interest in something far afield, and turned her back to him, then all of a sudden she found herself seized from the rear, and swung round and round, until all breathless, she was plumped down on her feet facing him, while the mad youth waving his cap gleefully in one hand, with the other seized hers, and shook it wildly.

"Congratulations, Alice; congratulations, the game's all over. The old hound left on the three forty train,—good riddance. He's all in; made some terrible blunder; anyway, he's gone—come, let us dance and hoot."

"You mad creature, calm yourself and tell me all about it," she said laughing. "Did he arrest anyone?"

"Nary a one, little girl. He, and his sandy-haired assistant walked out looking as glum as a rainy day, with never so much as a nod my way. He got orders from headquarters to report tomorrow. It came over the wires at noon. The one thing that puzzles me is who wrote that last letter. It looked like ours."

"That does not matter, does it, so long as he is away? But perhaps it's just a lull—they may come back again for me."

"Never you fear, Alice, darling," the head clerk smiled into her elusive blue eyes. "You are as safe now, as your grandmother's ducks."

"But think of their ultimate fate," she parried.

"I don't want you to think of their fate," he drew nearer, "Won't you please think of your own, and may I have a say in what it is to be? Can't we begin together, Alice,—to carve out our own destiny,—side by side?"

She did not answer, and as her face was turn-

ed from him, he could not see the love in her eyes; but very low, so low that her voice seemed almost a whisper, she breathed, "It's an ill wind that blows nobody good isn't it Harry?"

The beach was deserted; just they two, so close that a fairy breeze blew her curls touching his forehead, then fancying the spot, the same little breeze frolicked about for a while, listening to their sweet love making.

Later on the same evening, Mrs. Guy Forester, her trunk packed and ready to leave by the late train that night, accepted Robert Smith's invitation to survey the grounds, which she knew little about because of her enforced seclusion.

"Some other time, you must spend a real holiday here," he said, thoughtlessly, as they strolled across the lawn. "The place is well worth it."

"Never again, Mr. Smith. I could not; it is beautiful, I know,—but I hate it."

Lillian Forester was strictly tailored, in a black suit, and small stylish hat. To Smith she appeared very confident and determined, a woman knowing her own mind. An air of extreme exclusiveness followed her. Her wealth seemed part of her. She had known nothing else since childhood, and just now she made him think of a very accurate piece of statuary.

No trace of the previous night's mental suffering was evident on her countenance. She was a perfect sample of self control.

"It has been a losing game for us both, Mrs. Forester," he remarked attempting a lighter tone. "With such gayety as surrounds one here, we seem out of place; yet is it not better to dance and play, even though we don't feel like it, than to give in to despair. After all, life gets to be pretty much of a bluff anyway."

"I am too honest," she confided, "but I will have to learn to bluff more. I see the advantage in it. It would seem that in this life we build in order to pull down. My life has to be all reconstructed. I have learned much since coming to *Les Quatre Vents*; it has seemed like a lifetime; but I can't afford to indulge in self pity which always weakens one's power for further resistance. You see I have begun to write my own 'law and commandments'—everyone has to sometime."

They were standing by a hedge of flowering shrubs, as she spoke, and from the other side of the foliage a man's voice reached them. As the tones became more distinct, Mrs. Forester clutched nervously the black silk chatelaine bag which she carried, and looked up almost pitifully into her companion's face.

Then they listened in silence.

Beyond the shadow of the pines, over the brow of the distant hill, the moon stately, and calm, rose out of the dusk of the night, converting its shade into mellow light, while the bloom of the hedge row gleamed like a snowy wave, sweet scenting the breath of the evening.

"You do not understand, Alice," the man's voice was saying, "she is all I have; my business has filled my life to the exclusion of all else save her—and often she, too, has suffered. It is like giving part of my life to give her but—" after a pause, "she deserves a better man and if she loves him—"

"You will play the game fair, Guy," a gentle woman's voice answered, which caused Robert Smith to turn his head away from his companion, and toy nervously with the button of his vest.

"The other one's happiness first, must be our motto—your's as well as mine. Perhaps our hearts will dry up after a while and we won't care."

"But it is all so wretched," the man rebelled again. "I can't get used to it. What will I do with myself? I was going back to her."

The pain in the voice made the listeners dumb. Robert Smith touched his companion's arm, and

his voice had a glad ring to it. "See," he said, "it's all been a mistake; let us go to them."

A few days later in Boston, while Thomas Timothy Timmins, T. T. T., Winkler, of the Haynes Detective Agency, smarted under his recent humiliation, he received two very interesting letters.

The first, strange to say, came from the suspected thief in his last case, the case which had brought about his present humiliation, when Mrs. Josiah Grimes, widow of the late Josiah Grimes, notorious money lender, better known as "grinning Joe," lost her valuable pearl necklace, and employed the Haynes Agency (in this instance Winkler) to run down said thief, and recover her stolen treasure.

"I want you to know all about me," the letter ran, "for fortunately we have never met, although I believe you have been seeking my acquaintance for some time. I went to Les Quatre Vents, Mr. Detective for a holiday, and finding the board and lodging too expensive, set out to seek a more moderate stopping place, which I found not many hundred yards from the fashionable hotel. There I have been, within a stone's throw of you ever since. I saw you most every day, and admired your tie ring immensely. My friend calls it 'some dazzler.' I also knew what

you were after, not because I was guilty, as you know now, but the 'Boston News' told me your errand, and opened my eyes to my own danger. Your 'circumstantial evidence' failed this time, and don't you think you have made a nice mess of it, and wouldn't it be well to abandon it altogether after this? It does not seem exactly square, does it? You are a servant of the law, Mr. Detective, but why be its slave? Have you not a little sense of your own? Could you not have reasoned that a governess with a mother to support couldn't holiday long at Les Quatre Vents unless she had gotten away with a gold mine, instead of a necklace. Why! think of the money one squanders on 'chauffeurs' alone, to say nothing of 'bell boys.' Why don't you marry and settle down, and get your wife to read to you? Somehow I heard of your friend 'Tim the Tickler' and it seemed good to me to resurrect him for a while, so I did. It was hard on you, but I'm glad, because you deserved it. I wrote the letters, and laughed to see you off on those wild goose trips, and was planning another when the boss called you home. Good bye, Mr. Detective, and get wise before its too late. I won't tell you my present or future address, in case, just for spite, you might set fire to the house, or steal the chickens, and I won't tell you who

dictated this letter, or put me up to all the tricks, because you might hurt him—and I love him very much. Good bye, and when you lose your job, try the 'jewelry business.' From your innocent criminal, the real "Alice Bell."

Winkler threw the letter into the waste paper basket, after tearing it up into many very small pieces—and cut open the other.

"Dear Winkler," it read, "just a line of confession before we close shop for the day, never to meet again I pray. You did not let 'Tim the Tickler' worry you did you? for I played that trick on you, old chap, just for a bit of a lark, and to get you off the premises for the widow wanted to get home. But 'all's well that ends well,' and from now on my life will be one glad song. Never you mind how, but it will. Good luck to you Winkler, and may greater wisdom come with the years. Good bye and good bye, "Robert Smith."

"Great guns," exploded Winkler, "Will the mystery never clear? Someone lies, but who, and why? What is their object? It looks like a combine with spite the motive power." Then he stood up and tugged down his wrinkled vest, set his diamond tie ring straight, and twirled round his finger his waxed moustache, then pulling low over his eyes his black silk peaked cap,

winked his right eye, and clicked his right thumb. "I have it," he said, "contempt of court." Then after remaining strangely silent for a long time, he muttered. "After this, I'll keep my mouth shut."

The hounds of the law still hunt down their prey; let them hunt and catch what they can, but hush—the day is done—all the little birds have gone home to nest.

